

BX9225.W43 A3 1962
Whitley, Henry Charles.
Laughter in heaven.

Laughter in Heaven

By the same author

BLINDED EAGLE:
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE
LIFE AND TEACHING OF EDWARD IRVING

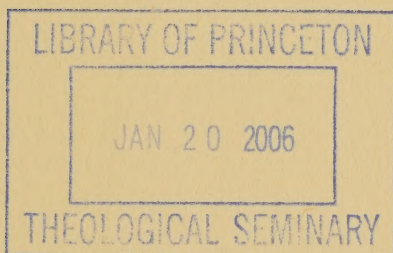


Reproduced by courtesy of 'The Scotsman'

HENRY C. WHITLEY

*Minister of the High Kirk of Edinburgh
St. Giles' Cathedral*

Laughter in Heaven



FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY
WESTWOOD, NEW JERSEY

© Henry C. Whitley 1962

*This book has been set in Bembo type face. It has
been printed in Great Britain by The Anchor Press,
Ltd., in Tiptree, Essex, on Antique Wove paper.*

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh

Psalm 2, verse 4

FOR LAWRENCE TO KEEP HIM LAUGHING.
TO EDWARD, ELIZABETH, MARY AND MICHAEL
WHO SHARED IN OUR LAUGHTER.

Contents

<i>Author's Preface</i>	9
<i>Introduction</i>	II

PART ONE

NEWARK

1	No Other Way	15
2	The Call	23
3	Beauty for Ashes	50
4	Building the Walls	62
5	The Wearisome Years	80
6	Rise Heart	98
7	Outside the Walls	110
8	Fun and Games	122

PART TWO

PARTICK

9	Another Battlefield	143
10	Rats, Drains and W.C.s	156
11	Laughter in Heaven	171
12	St Giles'—a Postscript	184
	<i>Appendix</i>	188

Author's Preface

When I was called to St Giles' in 1954 it rather looked as if the Outsider had sneaked up unseen on the rails and beaten the favourites in the nick of time. Most people wondered, and perhaps still do, whether an Outsider can become an Insider in the capital city of Edinburgh. The purpose of this essay in unclassical autobiography is merely to illustrate how to become an Outsider with cheerfulness and a sense of fun. It is also intended to prove that there need never be a dull moment in the Holy Ministry. Perhaps, too, it may explain why sometimes the pulpit of St Giles' makes news on occasions other than on royal visits, national celebrations and civic ceremonies.

I have not always observed a strict chronology, for this is not meant to be history, but a foolish attempt to arrest time in the interests of the heart. For that reason I have omitted many names and some friends, with the result that this is an impressionist tapestry in which the pattern is difficult to find; but, turn it this way or that, I hope it will reveal some colour and its own shape. To live again with the tears and laughter of the past is to make bearable the present and encourage hope that the future need never be without meaning if sometimes without reward.

H. C. WHITLEY

Introduction

Perhaps the most memorable sermon I ever listened to lasted half a minute. He was an old minister, white-haired, bent, but with a voice which was still strong and warming, and he had a gentle, hurt face. The church was grim and dull and depressing, as was the parish in which it stood, one of the forgotten slums of Edinburgh. I was trying to run a boys' club nearby in half a dozen rooms of a condemned property. It was still a day when students felt impelled to do some social work as part payment for the privilege of being educated.

This Sunday morning I had gone to church reluctantly—I thought it was out of touch and woefully inadequate to the problems which faced us all. The building was three-quarters empty, the congregation a few men and the rest women and children. The preacher was acting locum, for there was a vacancy. The service had followed the normal pattern and we all sat back waiting for the sermon. Wearily, the minister looked round his unencouraging congregation and then in a voice half-broken with emotion he declared: 'I have no sermon this morning, nothing would come and I've been so busy with many things—I'm not sure what I believe, except that Jesus lives. Forgive me, I feel so ashamed.' The tears were now trickling down his cheeks—struggling, he pronounced the blessing and left the pulpit.

INTRODUCTION

This is no success story; it is but the broken record of a parish minister's life over twenty-five years when most weeks his sermons have had to be prepared and preached and sometimes such a sermon as I've described ought to have been spoken and once was, but for different reasons. This is more the account of a rebel's road than a pastor's progress.

If much that follows seems critical of the Church it is because I don't think I have ever fully believed in what is called the Church. Too often it has looked like a caricature of the real thing and far too often it has failed in its task, though few have had the temerity to say so. But always from the first days of my ordination I have held a blurred vision of what it should be and could be. My conclusions must wait to the end; they are, however, the result of experience—often bitter experience, sometimes humorous experience—rather than the calculated discoveries of book and study. The past twenty-five years have seen the distortion and then the gradual destruction of the public and familiar image of the Church. All the time new insights, fresh forms and disturbing understandings have been struggling to be born. History will in time prove that this has been happening in every denomination of the Church as the barriers which separate Christians have begun to fall.

PART ONE

Newark

No Other Way

I CAME into the Ministry of the Church in a roundabout way. My father, finding that the expense of educating four children at Edinburgh schools was becoming a heavy burden on his slender salary, decided that the time had come for me to leave school, especially as I was showing more interest in finding places in the school cricket eleven and the rugby fifteen than in academic study. True, I had become a prefect, but I had seemed gloriously indifferent to a future career. The headmaster had suggested that I should become a minister, and that was about the last straw. So, when a friend of my father offered me a place in an Edinburgh brewery to learn the business, I accepted this as a way out, though I deeply regretted having to leave school and its glowing prospects of a regular place in the cricket and rugby teams.

A few weeks before I left school, a former pupil, later to become a Lord Provost of Edinburgh, came to speak to our form on what he was pleased to call social service. He wanted volunteers to help run a boys' club in one of the worst slum districts of Edinburgh. It has been called one of the worst slums in Europe—the Pleasance, Dumbiedykes area. For no good reason other than a sense of adventure and a bad conscience, I volunteered. Within a month I was trying to

cope with forty to fifty unruly youngsters in half a dozen rooms of an even then condemned property. There were a few sticks of furniture, the odd chair and table which quickly disappeared for firewood to stoke the meagre fires in the squalid houses about us. A faded photograph which I turned up the other day reveals how poorly clad my members were. Tattered jerseys and much-patched trousers and, of course, bare feet. Through the day I worked in the brewery and each night hurried down to Prospect Street. This, then, was to be my first real introduction to the hideous problem of slums and bad housing, and the real beginning of my religious awakening. Like most teenagers, I had rebelled against church-going, which was accepted as part of the pattern of respectable Edinburgh life, and although my father insisted on parading us every Sunday morning my heart and my mind were not in it. There seemed to me an appalling discrepancy between what we professed and what we accepted, between the shattering demands of Jesus and the undisturbed complacency of the Church. All that I began to discover in the life of Edinburgh slums challenged my partially formed beliefs and made me cry out with what I thought was righteous anger.

One night a distressed widow came into the club to tell me that Andrew, her only son, had been caught by the police stealing coal, and that he was to appear in court on the Saturday morning. Could I and would I do something? I asked leave from my office to attend court, and it was readily granted. This was the first of what gradually became a regular series of visits to the burgh court. The clerk of court allowed me to say my piece on behalf of Andrew, the magistrate was most sympathetic and I found myself with my first probation case. These were the days before an official probation system was

formed. Pioneers like Nunky Brown, Betty Martin Stewart and Miss Harrison were already carrying the burden of this kind of work. They were tremendous people, and I quickly fell under the spell of their influence and enthusiasm. This was the great era of voluntary service and amateur social work. The Fettesian Lorettonian Boys' Club, the Pleasance Trust with the backing of the Ivory family, the University Settlement, the North Merchiston Boys' Club, were among the best-known projects. Stanley Nairne, George Troup, Jack Tait, Miss Drysdale and a host of others set an example which has never been equalled. I don't think Edinburgh has ever realized the amount of pioneer work which was done those thirty and forty years ago.

Before many months had passed I was to have a load of probation cases, most of them boys from the Pleasance and High Street area of Edinburgh. I was only a few years older than my charges, but the police were quite extraordinarily kind. When boys fell into trouble the police would notify me and I was allowed to visit them in the cells immediately they had been apprehended. If I undertook to stand bail for them they were given permission to go home. Meantime, my parents grew more and more worried as to what I was up to. My mother never got accustomed to the ring at the door-bell lest it be a policeman to leave a message about one of my juvenile delinquents. In fact she often scolded me and said: 'What will the neighbours think? I never had a policeman at the door until you started this club business.' But always, when I brought some scared youngster home after court proceedings, there was a meal prepared and invariably a shirt or a coat or a pair of shoes was found. When my mother died I was looking through the few belongings which she left, and, among some pieces of jewellery, I found a glass trinket

which had been given to her one Christmas by my 'bad boys'. She had treasured it all that time.

Three memories stand out particularly from these dramatic and to me exciting years. On a Sunday evening, when the weather was fine, we used to sit along the kerb of the pavement outside our derelict building. There was nothing much else to do—it was too smelly and warm to sit inside. Some kicked a ball about in the middle of the street, while the rest of us kept a wary eye open for any approaching policeman. Suddenly there swept round the corner a tall commanding figure, dressed as a minister—that was the odd thing about him—he ought not to have been dressed as a minister; at least he did not conform to our picture of a clergyman. He stopped, took a look at us and then sat down beside us, bending his long legs so that his feet were in the gutter alongside ours. I don't know what we discussed, but eventually he stood up and said: 'Why not come to church? I'll make a bargain with you. If you come I'll meet the gang of you next week and take you up the tower of St Giles' Cathedral, and give you fish-and-chips afterwards.' It was a deal, and he sprinted off in the direction of St Margaret's Parish Church as the plaintive last few strokes of the bell rang out.

We followed in a sheepish sort of way, knowing that we were not dressed for church—in fact, most of my companions had never been in church. Boldly, however, I led them in through the main door and quickly spotted an empty pew right at the back—it had cushions on the seat; perhaps that's why I chose it! No sooner were we seated than an elder moved up and loudly whispered in my ear: 'You can't sit there. This pew belongs to ——', and he mentioned some name. I refused to move. Again I was reminded that we were trespassing, and this time I answered, 'Well, if we can't sit here we won't sit

anywhere.' So up we got—I think we were all delighted to have an excuse for escape—and out we trooped.

I don't think we were pleased with ourselves, for we wandered back to our stance, and when eventually the congregation scaled we stood our ground and waited for the preacher. Along Prospect Street he came like a commanding officer descending on some disobedient troops. He gave us it good and hard for not keeping our word, and then I explained the reason. Instead of approving our action, he condemned us all the more. It rather looked as if our fish-and-chips and the tower of St Giles' were out. Then he laughed and said: 'All right. I'll see you next week outside the north door of St Giles'—my name is MacLeod.' This was my first and memorable meeting with George MacLeod—the most controversial minister in the Church of Scotland these last three decades. He was then assistant minister at St Giles' Cathedral.

We had our visit to St Giles' and afterwards an hilarious supper in a fish-and-chip shop in the High Street. We were all MacLeod men from that moment. Bit by bit he was to lead me to a decision. Ronnie Wright, Bill Rogan, Roy Sanderson, Duncan MacGillivray, Andrew Easton, could all tell a similar story of the MacLeod influence. He presented us with the challenge of the Holy Ministry and drove us till we took the plunge.

The second vivid memory I have is a controversy with the Ministry of Works. Within a stone's throw of our club was the extensive King's Park: spacious, impressive, with the Salisbury Crag, overawing with Arthur's Seat. Certainly it was a lung for the overcrowded streets that ran round its perimeter. Holyrood Palace, of course, reclined beneath its shadow. The problem for the children in these overcrowded areas was to find a place to play, and especially for the boys, a place to play

football. Playing football in the street was an offence, and every week some gang was 'lifted' for ignoring the regulations.

In a mad moment of identification, on a warm summer evening, I led my club of ragged urchins on to a level piece of ground opposite Holyrood Palace. Down went our jackets to make goal-posts and soon the game had started. It was not long before we were spotted, and the park rangers descended upon us and broke up the game, claiming our precious football. Our names were taken and we were ordered to clear out. I can still feel my hackles rise as I recall the incident. Acres of ground and no one allowed to play on them.

That night I wrote to King George V, asking permission to play football on some part of his park. I have ever since followed the same principle of going to the head of the house—you are more likely to get a civil answer and have something done. Weeks passed, and then I had a summons, courteous but firm, to present myself at an office—I think it was in George Street—and I know it was the Ministry of Works. It seems, looking back, and from the recesses of my memory, that I was received in a large carpeted room by a kindly, elderly gentleman. He read me a little lecture to the effect that one did not normally write letters direct to the reigning monarch, but that in this case His Majesty had graciously thought fit to refer the matter to the department which dealt with such matters as royal parks. Would I explain what I wanted? This allowed me to air my views on a whole lot of things, including slums, police courts and the need for playing fields. Having heard me out, he quietly informed me that we could have the use of Hunter's Bog for football, provided I agreed to be responsible for discipline and orderly conduct. Willingly, I agreed, and so began the nightly trek in the summer months from the squalor of Prospect Street

to the bracing air high up on Arthur's Seat. Sometimes we played football and sometimes cricket, and altogether the police courts began to find fewer youngsters from the Pleasance appearing before them.

The third memory was a sort of moment of truth for me. I was haunted by the thought that perhaps I had a vocation in the Holy Ministry. I had been seeing a lot of George MacLeod and admired him enormously, for he was a prince among preachers, but he never made it easy for us who were aspiring to follow in his steps. I wrote to him, and he replied always with humour and with understanding. I wish now that I had kept those letters. Step by step I was being drawn to a decision.

One Sunday night, for no conscious reason, I wandered into the Pleasance church at the top of Arthur Street. The building had no beauty, and there were no aids to worship. The minister was Dr Harry Miller. How much Edinburgh and the Pleasance owed to him in these dark days in the twenties! There was only a handful of people in the church. The Lesson read was from Isaiah vi and it was the subject of the sermon. I felt the preacher was speaking directly to me. I became anxious and disturbed as he repeated again and again the words of the young Isaiah, 'Here am I, send me.' Was this the moment of truth for me, the real moment of challenge?

All night the words rang in my mind; I could not escape them. A few days later I went to George MacLeod and said: 'I want to be a minister. How do I set about it?' He held out no easy way. For months I had to work at Latin (which I have never been able to master), for this was the subject I lacked for entrance to a university. Through the day I worked in the brewery; for a couple of hours each evening I ran my boys' club, and then home to books and study. When I was nineteen I gave up my job at the brewery, to the great relief of the

directors. The chairman summoned me to the board-room, and I can still see his impressive, bearded face as he told me that he and his fellow directors had decided months before that I would make a better preacher than a brewer.

In 1930 I graduated in arts, and went to Trinity College, Glasgow, for my theological course and to be student assistant at Govan Parish Church. More time was spent at Govan than at Glasgow University. The Govan experiment has been described many times, and I was privileged to be in on it from the start. In 1933 I was licensed to preach the Gospel, and ordained to the Holy Ministry in December of that same year.

The Call

I HAD been warned two nights before that a deputation was coming to hear me preach. It was rather unfortunate that they had chosen this Sunday, because I had been asked to preach a sermon on Edward Irving to mark the centenary of his death. I had prepared more than an historical appraisal: I had put into it something of my own experience as a child and youth, for I had been brought up in the Church which had grown out of Edward Irving's preaching—the Catholic Apostolic Church in Edinburgh. I don't think I have ever thrown off that influence. The austere and beautiful building, with its unique mural paintings, the measured and moving Liturgy—described once as one of the finest in Christendom—the colourful vestments and dignified music, could not fail to leave its mark on a child's imagination, and always in the hidden background the shadowy figure of Edward Irving. Later I was to write about him in a little book, *Blinded Eagle*.

Would any dour presbyterian congregation stand for this kind of tradition? I had grave doubts myself and I was preaching in Govan Parish Church, which itself through John MacLeod revealed the influence of the Catholic Apostolic Church. It seemed unlikely that this sort of sermon would

lead to my first charge and give me my first Call. The Call is an historic and, I believe, in spite of many trends away from it, a necessary and essential part of Scottish church life. It is what gives a minister his authority and puts him in the only true Catholic Order. Without the Call, apostolic succession and laying on of hands become meaningless and worthless. The shibboleths of ordination and order are among the least worthy dogmas and doctrines of the churches.

The Press did not take much notice of my attempted contribution to church history, but the visitors from Port Glasgow were not put off and began putting out cautious feelers. Was I interested in this church and parish, would I come and look at the church and the manse, would I meet a few of the office-bearers? It is a big decision for a young minister—almost instinctively he recognizes that the shape and colour of his ministry depends on his first parish. There he is largely made or broken. There his first vision either deepens or fades. There he makes his greatest mistakes and learns his most important lessons.

I consulted my friends, no two of whom gave me the same advice. One professor whom I approached thought that I was too young for an industrial parish, and that I would be wise to seek a small country parish where I would have time to study and develop. These were still the days when there were more ministers than parishes in Scotland. The poor intake of recent years has many causes, some, but not the most important, economic. If the truth were admitted it is because our best young men share the misgivings and criticisms of the big majority of the ordinary folk who stand outside the influence of the Church.

What makes a man seek ordination is usually his own deep secret. I myself had doubts about a vocation within the

ministry of the Church of Scotland right up to my last year as a divinity student and even then it was more by a silence that grows in the mind until it becomes a wordless voice that I made my decision, than because of some Damascus Road illumination. Again and again through the years doubts came: the dark night of the soul is no mystic's delusion but the recurring nightmare of every preacher who seeks to be obedient to the Word of God. I have always mistrusted the man who claims to have all the answers and would have us believe that faith raises no problems for him.

Maybe it was simply the awareness of a challenge, maybe it was that I believed that God was taking a hand in shaping my future, that I indicated an interest in Newark. I paid a secret visit, as I thought, to the town. I got in a bus at Govan, only to find that I had no money in my pocket to pay the fare. I told the conductress as much, and then looked helplessly about me as she rang the bell to stop the bus.

Then a voice behind me said, 'Sit down, I'll pay your fare—you'll be the young minister whom the folk at Newark are talking about.' With a laugh he moved in beside me. 'Don't look surprised. Port Glasgow is a small place and we all know one another's business. I'm one of the backsliders of Newark but I'm interested in what happens there. I had heard about you and had come up to have a look at you myself the other Sunday.' He chuckled. 'This will be a good story to tell. I'll give you a warning though. You either take to the dirty "wee Port" or you'll hate it like hell. If you don't like the look, then get the next bus back and forget about us. I'll tell you this though—if the Port takes to you, you'll never find a more loyal people and a better place to test your worth.' So we chatted the forty-minute run to the Port. As we parted he added, 'Your soft collar is not a good enough disguise for

a face like yours.' It was years later that he told me what exactly he meant.

Trying to look as uninterested as possible, I walked through the narrow streets. The town is built on a little ledge between the hill and the river. The shipyards seemed to run into the streets themselves, which were mainly dead-ends. The skeleton of one ship almost touched the main road. Following all the instructions I had been given, I skirted the church—from the outside it looked square and ugly, and the graveyard which touched two sides of it was overgrown with rank grass. I was to discover that the biggest brambles in the area grew there also, on the old Cholera Pit. Between the church and Halls was an empty crumbling dwelling-house.

I was not impressed and I began to wonder. Then on up the hill to have a look at the manse. Although I was a bachelor, I had been told that a good manse really did matter. I was only half-convinced then that that was true. A house of my own and a study was something I had always looked for—the shape or the build or the lay-out seemed of relatively little importance. And there was the manse, with a bit of a garden on a sharp slope, and for the rest it looked just like a house. It was built into the side of the hill and it was only two or three minutes from the church itself. It was not quite what I had looked for, but I could see that there was a nearly uninterrupted view of the shipyards and the river below. Now I had an idea of what the Americans call the 'Church Plant'. Suddenly I felt very much alone. Was this it? Or was I making a terrible mistake? The town was small, compact, overcrowded, I felt, the shipyards strangely silent. An air of depression, almost defeat, hung about it all. So far I had not spoken to a soul—perhaps after all I had not been spotted.

For days afterwards I was in doubt, almost wishing that

I would not have to make up my mind. Then came the letter—would I preach as sole nominee, and before the day was out a telephone message from the Session Clerk expressing the hope that I would accept. He would like to meet me along with the senior elder to talk over some points. He was glad, he added, that I had paid a visit to the parish. So I had been found out.

We met a couple of days later. James Dick—Rector of the High School at Greenock, ex-Provost of Port Glasgow, and Session Clerk of Newark—and Tom Fyfe—joiner and senior elder. In some ways they were the type of elder which the Church of Scotland at her best produces. They are busy men, involved in the world's work, but with a deep love of their Church—their service of the Church is no ploy or escape but a giving of their best to something that matters very much to them. They are moulded from an older pattern which we've lost. Too often today we have to make do with the best we can get, and too frequently the most resistant to change are those who take up church work as a hobby when they have retired and need an interest to occupy their time. Many of them are fine men and of great integrity, but the quality of the eldership in Scotland generally is not always of the best.

After our meeting I sent a letter to the Session Clerk. Looking back, it savours more of the confidence and daring of inexperience than of ordinary common sense. At the time George MacLeod told me I was raising difficulties which might well lose me the Call. I was, however, still trying to find a way of escape, in fact to test whether this was something of God or of man. It did not, however, deter the vacancy committee and I was duly invited to preach as sole nominee. There was no way out; this was to be the beginning of my ministry, this

was the door opening to my life's work. The calling of a parish minister was now open to me.

I was inducted on St Patrick's Day, 1935, by the Presbytery of Greenock and I was given my charge by Foster Franklin, who was then minister of Kilmacolm. By the strange working of Providence, when I was called to St Giles' twenty years later the charges were given to me again by Foster Franklin, who had by this time become the much-revered minister of Corstorphine. In the evening I was gowned by the oldest member of the congregation (Miss Forgie), and the only speech which remains with me from the excitements and high hopes of that day was the one given by Mr Moir Porteous. He said that he stood at the end of his ministry, behind him were more failures than successes, but I stood in the bright dawn of my ministry. What would I make of it?

He spoke out of a wealth of knowledge and out of many a heart-break. He represented an order and tradition that was passing. I still can see him—the long lean figure—he always wore the clerical morning coat and shovel hat—never once did I see him with a soft collar and tie. He had stayed on in his parish long after he was able for the work, and gradually he had seen his congregation dwindle until most who remained sighed for his departing. Thus early I became familiar with the problem of the aged and infirm minister who for economic reasons could not retire, and because of the rigidity of our system could not find a quiet and easy parish in which to end his days. One of the tragedies of union, and readjustment of parishes and the sharing-out of endowments, is that there are fewer and fewer parishes to which a tired and worn-out minister can turn for a place of escape and recovery. There is much to be said for retaining small country parishes, with a

minimum endowment, where men who have given of their best years could still exercise a ministry of grace and comfort.

I moved into the manse that night. My mother had come to spend the first week with me and to see me to rights. The house had no electric light when first we saw the inside—gas was apparently considered good enough for the manse. My mother had made a tour of inspection with me, and very quickly pointed out to Tom Fyfe that I would most certainly gas myself unless some safety gadgets were put on the taps. It was a short step then to persuading the Manse Committee to put in electric lighting. Without her, I would most certainly have walked into the manse without demur, gas or no gas. In recent years congregations have come to realize that many of the manses in Scotland are too large and often quite inadequate to do the work which centres on a minister's house. How ministers' wives have coped throughout the years could make a moving and heroic story. Most presbyteries now insist that a suitable manse be provided, but I have visited many manses in recent years which constitute a burden and a heart-break to the minister's wife.

For the first few Sundays the church was filled morning and evening. Everybody came to have a look at the new minister. After the morning service on my first Sunday an old man with a seraphic face, and carrying a bowler hat which seemed oddly unconnected, came into the vestry and shook me warmly by the hand and told me it was the finest sermon he had heard in many a long day. I really felt cheered; this was getting off to a wonderful start. For the next few Sundays this was repeated—and always with the utmost visible sincerity.

Finally, I had to express my gratification. The Session Clerk, Mr Dick, had come into the vestry hard on the heels of my

enthusiastic friend and I could not help but say, 'You know this is quite wonderful, every Sunday I've been here an old gentleman has come to thank me for my sermon—it has moved me very deeply.'

'Would you describe him to me?' said the Session Clerk.

This I did pretty accurately and then added that he always carried a bowler hat.

Immediately a smile lit up Mr Dick's face. 'Oh, I know whom you mean. That must be Sandy Connel—he's ninety-four and stone deaf!'

The church building was ugly by any standard. Built by the heritors in the middle of the eighteenth century, every inch of space was used up for pews—galleries ran round three sides. When eventually an organ was introduced a square alcove was built to house it and this became the focus of every eye in the congregation. The pulpit had been pushed a little to the side, and a small table, reminiscent of a hall table, stood in front of the organ screen. Pews, table, pulpit and font were all painted with a dark varnish, while the organ casing was of light oak. To complete the unattractive clash of colour, the ornate plaster ceiling was painted a bright blue studded with golden stars; whether this was simply the measure of the artistic taste of the period or an attempt to give an impression of the heavenly spaces no one could tell me. The whole effect was oppressive and gloomy. All the windows had been filled with coloured glass, nondescript and repulsive, so that at no point could the sun penetrate the building except through a little circular window with clear glass which for no apparent reason had been broken into the rear wall of the alcove immediately above the organ casing.

I tried hard to accept and to believe that a church should look like this. I knew many of the older people thought it

beautiful and loved even its imitation stone walls and the great hanging chandelier which drooped from the centre of the ceiling. This was the House of God to them, sanctified by the years and the succeeding generations of Fyfes, Patons, Mains, Murrays and Duncans. Two of the back pews had doors and desks, and panelling above head level. They had once been the pews of two shipbuilding families, the Murrays and the Duncans, now they were occupied by the Town Clerk on one side and the banker and his sister who shared with the family of one of the shipyard managers the other. The vestry impinged on the alcove, although originally it had been placed in the base of the tower, which had never been built owing to a dispute with the heritors or because of their meanness. A picture of the original plans for the tower hung in the vestry, a silent reminder of one man's vision, for it would have added a certain distinction to the building and would have been visible from the river and the railway, a shadowy lighthouse reaching out from below the hill.

Almost from the moment that I first sat in Newark the idea of trying to do something with the building began to take shape in my mind. Like so many others, I had come to accept that for proper worship a church must have a chancel, with a pulpit to the side, with a lectern, a font and a prayer desk. We were under the influence of what had been called the Scoto-Catholics within the Church. A theory of church architecture had begun to take shape at the turn of the century encouraged by men like James Cooper, Cameron Lees, John MacLeod and others of the same school. We did not realize at the time that this was no original theory evolved from the history and tradition of the Church of Scotland, but a disguised copying of Anglican ways and a mistaken idea of the meaning of Liturgy.

Most of the churches built in Scotland since the Reformation conformed to a very clear pattern. The church building was the place where the local congregation gathered to hear the Word preached and twice or at most four times a year celebrate the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The great emphasis was on preaching, in spite of Knox's effort to hold and balance the Word and the Sacraments. These buildings were intended to house the maximum number of parishioners for Sunday worship, for the rest of the week the building would be closed and unoccupied. The individual families within the parish were the units which mattered, and it was expected that daily worship should take place each day in the home. The father was the priest in the house; the Sunday exercises in church did not make sense without this understanding. It was, therefore, never the intention that these buildings should, or could, be used for a daily office or made to resemble the mediaeval cathedrals and parish churches. Their purpose was a wholly different one. It is, moreover, one of the basic problems of our own day: What is the church building meant to do in the modern world? Alas, most of the churches we have built since the war have been imitations of existing forms and traditions rather than the expression of new ways and understandings. With few exceptions, the churches erected in Scotland over the past twenty-five years are already proving to be inadequate for the work they are intended to do.

It was my awareness that the building for which I was responsible somehow did not reflect what I believed about worship that made me restless and impatient. I am bound to say that I was quite convinced about what I wanted to do. I wanted the building to be a place of beauty. I wanted to get rid of its utilitarian appearance. I wanted the building to be an aid to worship as well as a place of worship. I was convinced

that if one could change the appearance and lay-out of the building it would be a first step in the discovery of new and relevant forms of worship. At the same time the ugliness and depression which seemed to me to enfold the town's life urged me on.

It was the height of the Depression. Hardly a family missed the scourge of unemployment. Families were being broken up because of the Means Test and but for the few ships which the Lithgows were building 'on spec' the situation would have been unbearable. One evening I had gone along to the little paper shop run by Mrs Maher at the corner of Glen Avenue to get my evening paper and have my evening chat. Here all the gossip of the town could be learned. I had not been a minute in the shop when a boy ran in panting, 'Mr Whutley, there are some men going to pull down your Halls.'

I followed him at a sprint to find a crowd of men gathering round the front door of the Halls. Some of them were battering on the closed doors. In some terror I broke my way through and feebly demanded to know what was going on. One man, apparently the leader, explained to me that the Member of Parliament was holding a meeting in the main hall and he had refused to receive a deputation of the unemployed. They intended to see the Member even if it meant breaking their way into the building. I innocently suggested that I might be allowed into my own Halls if they stood back and let me have a bash and then perhaps I could persuade the Member to agree to their request. This was accepted as worth a trial, so I stood and battered on the door, demanding that they open up in the name of the parish minister. Presently a voice within asked what I wanted, and when I explained who I was the door was opened.

In less than no time I was face to face with the Member and

suggested that he might at least receive a few of the men—whether anything would be achieved relative to the Means Test I could not tell, but it would prevent any damage to my building. After some talk it was settled that a deputation of seven would be allowed into the Halls. I was then thrust out again and from the steps which led down to the street I laid the offer before the crowd. Solemnly, six men were named, and then it was proposed that I be elected the seventh member of the deputation and this was warmly received by the others. Once inside the small waiting-room, the six decided on how they should present their case and nominated one of their number to do this.

Men and Member met in an uneasy atmosphere, but I listened with growing anger as the case for the unemployed was quietly and methodically presented by the leader of the deputation. He was obviously experienced at the game and just as obviously expected no satisfactory answer to his questions. In any case, the Member of Parliament had no answer. However, the object of the exercise had been accomplished and we trooped out again to the cheers of the crowd.

The next morning I read on the front page of my newspaper: 'Parish Minister joins Communist Party.' To my horror I saw my own name and an account of the previous evening's proceedings. Clearly the whole affair had been organized by the leader of the local Communist Party and there I was a member of their deputation to the local Member of Parliament.

The repercussions were many and varied. Those who believe everything they read in the newspapers were either puzzled or angry, and in any case were after my blood. The others accepted that there must be some obvious explanation. Thus early on I learned two things about the Press—you can

never take for granted straightforward reporting and you must make up your mind either to use the Press or be used by it. By and large, most newspapers have been exceptionally kind to me, there has been only one newspaper which I have black-listed and it is now out of business. I spent the whole day wondering whether I should call a special meeting of the Kirk Session or give a denial to the newspaper. I did neither, for it was not long before the real story was round the town and my stock had risen a point or two; apart altogether from the amusement value it caused, I had been given some unsolicited publicity.

My early Session Meetings were canny affairs. We were getting the measure of one another. The real power, however, was my Session Clerk. How often I was to be grateful to him for getting me out of some awkward situations. I knew nothing at all about church law and procedure, he knew quite a bit. I had never seen a Kirk Session in being until I came to my first charge. Of this I am quite certain as I look back: you can have an awkward session and get by if you have a good Session Clerk, you can have as near perfect a session as may be, but if the clerk is not equal to his position, even with the best will in the world, matters will never run easily or smoothly. The Session Clerk has to combine the fairness of a Speaker, the sharpness of a lawyer, the patience of a saint with the gifts of faith, hope and charity. He should be able to guide the Moderator on points of order and always wise to know when to intervene in debates and discussions.

James Dick was the ideal Session Clerk for a young, inexperienced minister. He was respected and trusted by every elder, and yet somehow always managed to keep in the background. We got into the habit of wandering up the hill from the church to the manse after our meetings, weighing the

decisions taken and sometimes laughing over awkward situations. He never hesitated to lend encouragement usually salted with good sound advice. 'You'll get anything through the Session if you can convince Tom Fyfe and John Cormie,' he reminded me continually.

There had been Fyfes and Cormies in Newark since the church was built. Tom Fyfe just somehow knew every bit of the building and would shin up on the roof, for all his seventy years, after a storm to see that the slates were all right—he knew the siting of every drain and the name of almost every member of the congregation. He was master of works, joiner, plumber, and once he took over the preaching when one Sunday I was unwell. He had been a baillie in the Town Council, as had been a number in the Session. It used sometimes to be said in the town that if ever the Town Council were removed the obvious thing to do would be to move down the Kirk Session from Newark and leave them to get on with the town's business. The Town Chamberlain, the Town Clerk, the Burgh Engineer, the Sanitary Inspector, the Police Inspector, the Poor Law Officer were all elders in Newark when I became parish minister. Tom was stubborn when he liked. 'This 'ill nae dae' always became a warning sign to me, but his loyalty was deep-founded and you could trust him with your life.

John Cormie was a bachelor, retired, and he had money. He had come up the hard way, but there was no hardness in him. Without him, many of my plans and schemes would have come to nothing, that I now know. He was like all the Seven Dwarfs of Snow White knocked into one. Puckish and solemn, gruff and gentle, generous and mean, hard-headed and soft-hearted, shrewd but naïvely simple. He would without anyone's knowledge pay the seat rents for a couple of

pews, and stock them with cushions, hymn-books and Bibles so that no stranger need ever feel embarrassed looking for a seat—these two pews were for the use of strangers. He had once been turned out of a pew when he was a lad; this was his way of trying to ensure that that never happened to anyone in his own church. He was like no other elder I've ever known. When he died a few years ago my telephone in Edinburgh rang within an hour of his death with the request from his lawyer that I come to Port Glasgow to conduct his funeral. A car would pick me up and take me home again to Edinburgh. Could I and would I do it? I agreed and knew that I must cancel two engagements in Edinburgh to make it possible. After the service in the cemetery, as I stepped into the car, Colonel Young the lawyer put an envelope into my hand. 'John told me to give you this after you had buried him.'

'But how did he know that I would come?' I asked.

The reply was, 'He said you would come, he knew it and that's all that need be said.'

In the envelope was a cheque for £10 and a note in his own handwriting to thank me.

I realized that if I were to do anything to the building by way of reconstruction or alteration I must win the support of Tom Fyfe, John Cormie and James Dick. If they were not persuaded Newark would remain untouched and undisturbed.

I needed a drawing, a plan, a lay-out to show, something that would prove that the building could be altered and improved, made more dignified and lovely. At this stage I brought in Mervyn Noad as architect. It stands everlastingly to his credit that he gave hours of his time and skill with no hope of payment of any kind. We sat in the building, walked round it, almost lived in it for days, discussing possibilities.

We thought at last that we had a good plan—first a chapel should be built on the south graveyard side of the church to whet their taste, and then remove the holy organ, extend the alcove to make a chancel, scrape all the varnish off the pews, re-light the entire structure, knock out the windows and design a choir area directly running out of the chancel. When Mervyn Noad, with astonishing speed, produced colour drawings and ground plans most attractively got up, I felt I could tackle the Session. First I did my best to sell the idea to the big three—they listened with friendly interest and were not discouraging. John said, ‘After all, we knew we were in for changes when you came, and if this is the best for Newark, then the best we must have.’ They warned me, however, that it would be dangerous to push it all at once. Let it simmer in their minds for a bit.

When I brought it before the Session at last there was not the surprise that I expected, obviously my three good friends had been cautiously preparing the ground for me. The plans were pinned up on the walls of the session room and examined carefully and intelligently—they were a knowledgeable body of men and not easily fooled. We came to no decision and agreed to continue the matter for a month and invite the architect to come and explain his ideas. At least we had taken a shuffle if not a step forward.

At the next meeting there was some criticism voiced by a few and led by Tom Fyfe, who kept saying, ‘What was good enough for my father is good enough for me.’ Noad put over our case with winning charm and with infinite patience. I could not at first understand why he deferred so often to Tom Fyfe—and then the penny dropped: he was out to win the confidence of this canny man, aware that to win him was to win the lot. I then made my appeal: ‘This

is a new day for the church. Let us pioneer here, I'm sure this is the right thing to do and, moreover, it will bring some work to the town.' It would be a mark of faith and hope at a time when so many, through no fault of their own, had lost faith and hope. I ventured also to suggest that this could be the first sign of the turning of the tide and the end of the Depression. Then the question which I had dreaded all evening was asked. 'What is it going to cost?'

I replied that we estimated something in the region of £8,000. At once I was aware that such a sum in a town where unemployment was rife must sound like a fortune. The sticky silence which followed indicated as much. Long into the night we discussed where on earth so much money could be found. I thought we had lost. Then Tom Fyfe rose to his feet and in his hesitant way moved that the Session agree in principle to what was proposed but that no action be taken until the Moderator was able to give reasonable assurance that such a large sum of money could and would be raised. Unanimously the motion was carried.

As we sauntered up the hill, I could barely hide my joy and relief. How wonderful that they had all agreed! Now we really could press on! As we stopped at the back door of the manse, the Session Clerk looked at me with just the shade of a smile. 'Of course you realize that this is still your dream, the situation has not changed, no one in the Session believes for a moment that you will be able to raise £8,000 in Port Glasgow.' Then it was a dream or a possibility? Certainly I was on trial but the problem was where to begin—if only I could get a start—that's always what matters.

The following morning I was in Mrs Maher's paper shop—it was a cabin of a place, but from the start it had become a sort of haven of escape for me, and also a good spot to test out

what people were thinking in the town. Dan Maher, well on in years, had once been a plater—he was a devout Roman Catholic, a keen musician, he had for a number of years conducted one of the town's brass bands, but his wife, small and tubby, had kept her roots in Newark. She got the best of both worlds because Protestant and Catholic alike patronized her shop.

'I want to raise a lot of money,' I told the Mahers, 'to reconstruct Newark. Where can I get £8,000?' I asked them.

'It's a lot of money,' said Dan. 'Why don't you see the Lithgows, they might help. They do a lot of good by stealth, I know that. I would try Sir James. He'll bark at you, but if you can convince him it'll not be five pounds he'll give you. Look, I'll make a bargain with you. If you can get anything out of the Scarlet Runner [the adequacy of the nickname was to dawn on me later] I'll give you a pound, papist and all that I am.'

It looked as if I was on to something.

Without wasting any time, I wrote to Sir James Lithgow, asking if he would see me, there were certain matters I would like to discuss with him relative to my church. By return of post I had an answer. He would see me at the Glen Yard on Monday morning at 9.30. What I preached about on the Sunday I can't remember, but some of my elders smelt something in the air. Archie Leitch, civil engineer, baillie of the town and father of five fine sons, put his head round the vestry door after the morning service and said, 'Are you thinking of selling or buying a ship, or is it just a bank you're going to raid?' Two Sundays before I had preached what I thought was a pretty learned discourse on the training and education of the Christian family. Archie's head had appeared round the door after it with this dry comment: 'A fine sermon,

minister, wait until you have a family of bairns of your own and you'll not talk such nonsense.' Time and time again he was to bring me down to earth.

On Monday morning I trotted down Duncan's Brae thinking I was in good time. In fact I entered the yard office a couple of minutes after the half-hour. I asked for Sir James and was told he had expected me at 9.30. Would I mind waiting a few moments. I was left on a bench to cool my heels for fifteen minutes and then shown into Sir James's room.

He barked at me, 'You were late.' It was a bad start, and I was being taught my first lesson—ever since I've been in terror of arriving late for important meetings. 'Well, what do you want?' I laid my drawings on his desk and began to explain what I was after. Then came a battery of questions—capped with, 'It sounds to me as if the "new broom" is getting to work with a vengeance, but answer me two final questions. Is all this necessary?'

As confidently as I could I said, 'Yes.'

'Do you think you'll get all that money?'

Not confidently but boldly I said, 'Yes.'

He looked at me with a twinkle in his eye, and then rose from behind his desk. So I had failed—this was my exit. But no. He walked over to the window—I was on my feet by this time—came towards me, looked me over again and threw at me: 'Right! Come back here in six months' time with a thousand pounds and I'll give you a thousand, and don't be late the next time.' The clock showed ten o'clock.

I almost ran downstairs, a grin from ear to ear. As I passed through the open office I knew speculation had started. I could not wait until after school hours, but hopped on a bus to Greenock. I just had to tell James Dick, the Rector of the High School. When I told him the good news he cooled my

enthusiasm a bit. 'A thousand pounds is a lot of money to squeeze out of the congregation in such a short time, but go and have a chat with John Cormie.'

There are many people to whom I am eternally grateful and they will keep popping up as this story proceeds. Not least among them is John Cormie. At one of my earliest Session Meetings there had been some objections to certain changes which I had proposed. John came to the rescue with a dogged defence. 'When we called our minister we knew that there would be changes, in fact we wanted changes. I am older than most of you, but I'm still ready for adventure.'

One of the real conflicts today is that between youth and age. It has always been a conflict, but now it seems more pronounced. Medical science has made it possible to prolong life and the result is that our population is ageing, and a sometimes intolerable burden is being laid on younger people. Knowing well that this is an age which demands resilience and quick thinking, and robust enthusiasm, youth is aware that age hangs on too long, resisting change and holding on greedily to privilege and ground gained. It is not too much to say that a lesson which needs learning in all walks of life is to know when 'to step sideways with grace and with dignity'.

I think on the whole men are slower or more unwilling to learn this than are women. Women, bringing forth life, know how to live and let live—they are nearer to the source of things and instinctively they know what is real. 'Battle-axes' I've encountered during my ministry in plenty, but the women I do remember are those who gallantly and graciously lived, stepped aside with charm and had as many admirers at seventy as they had when they were twenty. Men are different, their egos matter and therefore their status, their

rank, their honour, their place in the sun seem to count more than anything else. Of course, there can be selfish old women, who batten on to the lives of their daughters, but old men have a special corner in selfishness, it is the selfishness of pride which would cloak their waning powers and unadventurous minds.

John Cormie was not of that mould. Although getting on for his three-score-years-and-ten, he was game and, as he said, 'ready for adventure'. When I climbed Clune Brae to face him in his own house I wondered what line I should take. Somehow I felt he held the key to the Session's heart. He had no collar on when he opened the door—his house-keeper was having a day off. His study was also his bedroom. In the corner stood an old-fashioned roll-top desk which he always kept locked. There was a comfortable chair and a bench. He beckoned me to the bench. Well, what was I after? I told him of my visit to Sir James, adding that I liked him. He was not nearly so frightening as I thought he might be, remembering my first sound of him. (I had been in Mrs Maher's shop, and it took in the noises outside with something of the accuracy of a pick-up set. Two voices loudly cursing with glorious pungency drifted into the shop—the Mahers batted not an eyelid. 'Who are these men?' I asked. The reply shook me:

'Oh, that is James and Henry Lithgow. You can't mistake them, and they are devoted to each other.')

I told him of Sir James's offer; the question was how could I raise £1,000 in six months. I explained that I thought we should prepare a letter and send it to every member of the congregation suggesting how they might give, and also send round the elders to explain and plead the cause. All this was received without comment. When I had finished putting him

in the picture, at least that is what I thought I was doing, he shot at me, 'What do you expect me to do?'

I hesitated on this, because I did not quite know what I wanted him to do. Tentatively, I thought he might be ready perhaps to start us off. He changed the subject and we talked about a lot of things, and I began to feel I was not making much progress. Then in a matter-of-fact way he unlocked his desk and began to write, not a cheque, but on a piece of notepaper, and left me to twiddle my thumbs. Carefully he blotted what he had written, put it in an envelope which he closed and then handed it to me. 'You can open it now if you want to, but I suggest that you keep it closed until you discover how you are making out with your appeal to the congregation. It simply says that I am prepared to underwrite to the sum of £1,000 what is lacking in the sum subscribed by Newark in response to your appeal. If anything happens to me during that time you'll still be able to do what you want to do, and you can tell the elders that I have given you such a letter. My lawyer will honour it.'

I never needed to use that letter, but it was the trump card that I held up my sleeve during the next few months. The letter which went out to the congregation was more than an appeal for money, it was the expression of a young minister's belief. Of course wholly inadequate and foolishly immature, but it did have the ring of conviction, however limited:

'... Your Kirk Session and Congregational Board, after very careful consideration, venture to ask your support in an adventurous scheme for improving and beautifying the Church. We are deeply conscious that these days are difficult for many of you as far as money matters are concerned, unemployment like a horrid monster still

broods menacingly over our streets. Therefore, truly we don't find it easy to ask you and it is only your extraordinary generosity in days past to your Church that has decided us to appeal to you.

Someone has said that there is only one revival that this country deeply needs, and that is the revival of true religion. Jesus Christ is calling us on to build His Kingdom in this world of doubt and distress, and He it is alone who can save us and lead us to that Kingdom which has neither beginning nor end, where in place of chaos there is complete harmony in all things. His Church which is His Body on earth is the instrument of His purposes and it dare not falter in the face of difficulty. His Church must be like Him, gloriously daring and gloriously generous, giving and not counting the cost, fighting and not heeding the wounds, labouring and not looking for any reward save the knowledge that we do God's will.

The sum we ask for is a large one and may well make many of you afraid, but we firmly believe that, formidable though it may be, it is not insurmountable. Will you pray for the success of the scheme and give as generously as you can?

“Break the box and shed the nard
 Stop not now to count the cost
 Hither bring pearl, opal, sard
 Reck not what the poor have lost
 Upon Christ throw all away
 Build His Church and deck His Shrine!”

As this quotation shows I had already at this time found the poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins—twenty years later

he was to become a fashion and a cult—and I liked what he did with language. At this time too I paid my first visit to Father Keane. The R.C. chapel was within my parish and with a certain naïveté and some boldness I called. The Irish maid who opened the door of the Presbytery House looked a little surprised when I asked to see Father Simon; she had spotted the new minister. I was left on the doorstep and I was very much aware, from the looks of the passers-by, that news of this visit would not be long in circulating the town. Very self-consciously, I patiently waited to be admitted. Then the door opened. A great lump of a man stretched out his hand, and in the most beguiling Irish brogue bade me step inside. ‘You’ll have some lunch’—this was four o’clock in the afternoon. I explained as firmly as I could that I was the new parish minister and, as he lived within my bounds, I felt it would only be courteous to call on him. Peals of laughter followed this. ‘By God, you *must* have lunch! I’ve been called many things but this is the first time I’ve been called the parish-ioner of a bloody minister.’ As the years passed, ‘bloody minister’ became a term of endearment—then it shook me a little.

I wasn’t hungry, but lunch it had to be—liberal helpings of roast beef and potatoes and cabbage washed down with an excellent red wine. The meal went on for an hour, young curates moving in to eat and to have a look at this strange presbyterian and then off on their duties. Father Simon never stopped talking—I warmed to him. I don’t readily and quickly take to people, and my close friends have always been very few, but this was the beginning of a firm and loyal friendship which was to last unbroken throughout my ministry in Newark. After lunch he took me round his church, then to the small room which served as his bedroom and study. He was a

lonely person, and he is to me one of the profoundest arguments against celibacy, for what a wonderful father he would have made to a real family of children! Part of the heart-break of his life, I was to discover, was that this deepest and most divine of all experiences had been denied him. Then I thought I was a confirmed bachelor, and years later Simon told me that he would have betted that within a few years I would have become a priest. In fact, for a number of years prayers were said daily by him and his dear friends the nuns for my conversion.

At the conclusion of this first visit he steered me out on to the main street, whether by intent or pure accident I shall never know. The workers from the yard and nearby sail-making factory poured thinly out on their way home or to the pubs. These were the fortunate ones, the ones with jobs. Priest and parish minister stood together for them all to see. I, at least, was in right up to the neck. The next morning an anonymous letter informed me that I had been seen with the Roman priest and this was a warning to me, Protestants and Catholics don't mix. If I did not take heed things would be made uncomfortable for me in Port Glasgow. It is difficult to ignore anonymous letters—they are the devil's artifice to cause merry hell. Nowadays I throw them in the waste-paper basket or include them in a file which I label 'Abuse'. This file grows wonderfully, and may one day prove to be the material for a lecture on 'What it takes to make and to keep humanity less human'.

I was worried and just a little frightened, but soon forgot the terms of the warning as I made my way down Balfour Street. My church stood at the top of it and at the bottom just round the corner was the R.C. chapel. Later it was to be said in fun that 'Balfour Street was all that stood between the chapel and Newark'. Across the road I spotted the old

porter who hung about the station, pushing a barrow loaded with a number of heavy-looking bags. I hailed him and getting alongside helped him to push it. Round the corner into Princes Street we went and stopped outside the bank. I was profusely and warmly thanked for my help. As I stepped on the pavement a hand touched my shoulder, and a voice said, 'Do you know what you've been doing?' The voice came from above the deepest clerical collar I had ever seen.

I answered cheerfully, 'Oh yes, helping an old man to push a barrow.'

A long shivering silence, the hand was removed from my shoulder, and the reedy voice continued, 'Brother, you've been helping to push the collection for Lent from the chapel.'

How gauche and foolish can a young minister be? But I was making friends in the town and beginning to find my way about. The next Saturday was to throw me right in at the deep end. About seven in the evening my telephone rang—it was the Police Inspector. 'Man, there is a riot in the Glen, Protestants and Catholics knocking the lights out of one another. Would you come down and see if you can separate your Protestant sheep from the Catholic goats, and see if you can get Father Keane, I hear you're both friendly. We're short of men—there's a big game at Cappielow.'

I phoned Simon. Fortunately he was in and I told him what had happened. 'Right oh, me boy, I'll meet you at the foot of Balfour Street and we'll scatter the Philistines.'

Five minutes later we were striding side by side towards a mob of two or three hundred men—there was a no-man's-land of the Glen Burn between them. I was scared. Father Simon had a strong walking-stick in his hand and he showed not a trace of fear. 'Come on,' he said, 'we'll deal with my flock first.' Right in among them he went, flailing right and

left with his stick and cursing them in the broadest Irish imaginable. In next to no time they began to scatter. Some faces he recognized, and his powerful voice called out: 'Go on, Paddy, get home, you scoundrel. I've brought the bloody minister to scare you if this stick doesn't.' One side of the road was cleared. Then we moved to the other. Beside me he whispered, 'Perhaps you should try a word of prayer.' But there was no need—like sheep they scattered. Half a dozen worried policemen and the Inspector joined us. They were sorry to draw us in, but the suggestion, when things really looked dangerous, had come from old Paddy, the porter, that Father Keane and Mr Whitley might together do the trick. Though it had come to be a regular occurrence whenever there had been a big football game or an 'Orange Walk' on July 14th, there was never to be another riot in the Glen.

Beauty for Ashes

ONE of my first rows in the Presbytery of Greenock was over the word 'PARISH'. When I came to Newark I was astonished to find written on the church notice-board 'Newark Church of Scotland'. It was imposed upon the words which I could still dimly make out, 'Newark Parish Church'. One of the first instructions I gave was to paint in again 'Newark Parish Church'. It is this concept which more than anything else holds me to the Church of Scotland. Why on earth, after the union of the Churches in 1929, the word 'parish' was obliterated I shall never appreciate. They were still arguing about it in Assembly in 1961. This is the basic right and heritage of our national Church—it is the one thing that allows us to claim to be a national Church. A body of people set in an area of Scotland to serve all people within it, a building dedicated to the glory of God wherein all are welcome, where there are no privileges for anyone save that of worshipping God in freedom and in truth.

A while back, I visited an area in New York—East Harlem. Here are all the violent problems of colour and race, religion and denomination, politics and slums. Some ten years ago nine denominations (Protestant) joined forces to do something in this tragic inner city of New York. Crime, narcotics,

Communism, ugly politics, human decay and disaster from this area made the news for the yellow Press. Suddenly it was realized that the Protestant Churches had lost out. Building after building had been closed, and it had been tacitly accepted that the Protestant Churches were largely for the middle classes. It is just as true today in Scotland.

But a group of ministers decided to cut loyalties, break tradition and move into this area of New York with one intention, to serve the people in the name of Christ. They called themselves the East Harlem Protestant Parish. The contradiction of the title did not cross their minds. How can you have a Protestant Parish? Their instinct, however, was right and their intention of God—all this, events have mightily proved. Yet their concept of parish has still to be worked out, and their frustrations are largely due to their inability to develop the true economics and spirituality of a parish. A parish can have no denominational label—it is an area and all its life has relation to a true parish church. America may move, by the force of circumstance and the proliferation of denominations, to a parish economy which could bring to an end the disunity of the Church in this great land.

Yet here we were in Scotland thrusting aside the one great tradition which is worth preserving—the PARISH CHURCH. My boldness or innocence brought the Presbytery down on my neck. I had no right to do this. And when I look at my Call, bound in handsome leather, I read that I was inducted to the parish and congregation of Newark Church of Scotland. It just does not make sense. Whoever were responsible for this betrayal of true tradition have much to answer for.

I was summoned by the clerk to appear at the next Presbytery meeting to answer charges brought against me by certain of my neighbour ministers. I was new and I was young, and

I was inexperienced, but I was determined that if the case went against me I would resign my charge. It was a restless Presbytery meeting, and sympathy was not on my side because most churches in the area had conformed. A letter complaining of my action was read. What had I to say? It was a brief speech that I made. The Union of the Churches removed a crying scandal in Scotland—every church within the Church of Scotland was now a parish church, and I had simply underwritten what was implicit in the Act of Union. My case was upheld and within weeks the word ‘parish’ began to appear again on the notice-boards of the churches within the area.

The working out and meaning of the Parish Church is today the most important problem for the Church of Scotland. If we fail in this important task we deserve to become simply another denomination of the splintered Church of Christ, and we will have sold our heritage. Apostolic Succession, inter-communion, ecumenicity, have no meaning if we detach these from the concept of the parish church. Simply it means this, ‘To be the company of Christ’s followers set in a geographical area to serve the people who live in that area, and to offer up the whole life of the community to be forgiven and blessed of God.’ The strength of the Church of Scotland lies in its ability to create a parish economy in terms of what it means today, ‘to do what it takes to make and to keep humanity human’. It means to obey the politics of God whose plan is to make a city.

I think my people were happy about the result. In some ways it added grist to my mill. If we were then the parish church, let us make a building which was worthy to carry such a name. It ought to be the most lightsome and alive building in the parish. There could be no place for gloom

and darkness, shoddy work and indifferent art. Only the best was good enough. God's House in this little bit of Scotland must have colour and meaning—it must have beauty and dignity—it must speak of resurrection and not of death. How often, as I've moved about churches in Scotland in these last seven years, have I become aware that these were not places of light and life, but tombs to a God who was dead. Brooding over them is the awareness of the Presence of the Absence of God—a great deadly emptiness—where there should be RESURRECTION. My preaching at this time, tentative and poor as it was, had a note of confidence and of hope. I would not dare to preach one of these sermons today, but they were a good reflection of a wanderer's way. If I had known then the words of a great anthem which thrills me now every Easter I should have quoted the words:

‘Rise heart: thy Lord is risen. Sing His praise
Without delays,
Who takes thee by the hand, that thou likewise
With Him may'st rise.’

During my visit to America I looked from the window of the manse and saw that the church was floodlit. It made a splash of light in the darkness of the trees and sent my memory flashing back to the first time I had floodlit Newark—from Montclair in New Jersey to Newark in Scotland. A far cry, but not when memory holds the door; it's like stepping over a threshold into the past. It was my first Christmas in my first parish and I wanted to make the church stand out. No handsome building this, but it could be seen from the river and it could send a glow into the heart of the town. The Kirk Session had been persuaded to consent to a midnight service

on Christmas Eve. It was brave of them to agree, because it is doubtful if such a service had been held in and about the lower reaches of the Clyde since the days of the Reformation—at least in a parish church.

The Police Inspector warned me that there might be some trouble, for the Orangemen were circulating a rumour that it was to be a midnight mass. He would, however, have some men standing by 'just in case'. The jeremiahs were saying that no one would come. As if to add its hand to setting the scene, nature sent us a heavy fall of snow the day before and so the gauntness of the building was gently covered and the unkempt graveyard and surroundings were hidden under a thick coat of snow. The Willis boys who had fitted up the lighting were jumping with delight—the perfect setting to show up their handiwork. The secret we kept to the last minute was the setting up in the organ loft of an amplifying system to play out a record of chimes half an hour before the service was due to begin.

I was confident that the people would come, for we were beginning to become aware of ourselves as a parish church, but as the chimes rang out clearly over the town with astonishing clarity, lights went on and windows went up. Soon it seemed that the whole town had decided to come to church. By half past eleven the church was full to overflowing, even the policemen who had been keeping in the shadows had joined the congregation—there was the occasional drunk as well. Only a few of the lights within the church had been left on, but the glow from the floodlights gave sufficient light to see the words of the hymns. Then, as twelve o'clock struck, all the lights were turned on and I gave the Christmas Salutation: 'Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.' The singing immediately of 'O Come, All Ye Faithful' was a

deeply moving experience, and at that moment town and parish and people and church were one—God's people in God's House. For me it was an unforgettable occasion, too: I had learned for the first time the quite incredible joy of being father to my people. A bond between us was forged which was never to be broken, no matter how often I failed them and no matter how often they came nearly to breaking my heart.

The relation between a minister and his people is the most precious thing that the Holy Ministry can offer. You can't share your people with anyone else, since to have to do so is to cripple your ministry. Some of us who have tried to do it with all the charity and tolerance in the world have found it a sheer impossibility, it becomes a sort of spiritual bigamy—a desolating experience. To be yoked to your people is what induction most truly represents. It used to be the custom in the Church of Scotland that you could not be ordained until you were called to a parish. Not to have your own people is to take the heart out of a man and to lay an intolerable burden upon him. One day the General Assembly must bring to an end even the remotest possibility of such an occurrence.

I made my way home to the manse tiredly happy and humbly grateful. Three young couples came to me after the service to say that they were engaged—they had plighted their troth soon after midnight. Through the years this was to become a Newark custom on Christmas Eve. The manse seemed curiously empty and I was very much alone in spite of the friends who brought me gifts and the warmth of affection that surrounded me.

The next day I had an important engagement. For the previous six months I had been trying everything to raise my £1,000. The congregation had responded wonderfully to

my appeal and so had the town. Dan Maher had given me his pound with the comment that he would have to do the same for the chapel. Mrs Maher promised that she would leave me £50 in her will. Sixpences, shillings and pounds were contributed, no gift was considered small. Shopkeepers slipped me the odd pound note and we came nearer and nearer to our target. The Police Choir came from Glasgow to give us a concert in the Town Hall and raised £100 for us. John Tainsh and Marie Thomson came all the way from Edinburgh to sing for us in our own Halls and another £50 was raised. One Sunday evening Hugh Crowe after the service left an envelope with me. 'It's my week's wages and I talked it over with my wife and the children—we want you to take it.' Hugh was to come to my aid many times and in many ways, and his Franciscan generosity was often to leave me breathless and ashamed. He was one of the few men I've met who quite literally and recklessly believed in the power of Jesus—and prayer was, as he once said, as necessary to him as his breakfast. The offerings on Christmas Eve gave me the £100, or thereabouts, which I still required to make up the £1,000.

Christmas Day was not a holiday. In any case, the men who had jobs were happy to work. Sir James was waiting for me in the office at Hamilton's Yard. 'What's this you were up to last night? I hear the whole town was at church.' Port Glasgow, its life and its ways mattered to Sir James more than anything else. It was always to be so even when he came to control great concerns like Fairfields, Beardmores, Rowans and all the interrelated works and factories which were even then beginning to lay the foundation of the Lithgow industrial empire. He hated publicity, and newspapers were anathema to him. And he was, until his later years, shy about confessing his love of the 'Dirty wee Port'.

‘Well, how have you done? You don’t need to tell me; by the grin on your face you’ve won, but mind you I did not think that you would do it.’ He there and then sat down and wrote me a cheque for £1,000. ‘Now I’ll make a bargain with you. Go on with your scheme, and nothing but the best work, mind you. If a thing’s worth doing it’s worth doing well. Come back when you want more money and don’t drive your people too hard. You must not get the reputation of the priest down the road—whom incidentally I hear you’re on good terms with—I believe he needs a barrow to take his spoils to the bank’—and he looked me straight in the eye. I often wondered where he got his information, but all the years I knew him I never found that I could bluff him over the affairs of the town—and sometimes I tried.

My heart was singing as I went home. Would I ever forget this first Christmas in Newark?

I think from the start I knew what I wanted to happen. We must let in life and let in light. Mervyn Noad was the ideal architect, he was finding his way and was open to all the influences of the modern world in architecture and in art. I don’t think we ever had a serious argument over the whole period of reconstruction—and it was to last two and a half years. We always think our best thoughts when we are young, and therefore can afford to be experimental. Mervyn drew numerous sketches (the fruit of long hours of discussion), but we both were determined that what should be presented to the Kirk Session would have our united unswerving support.

The mechanics were clear enough and the broad outline, but it was the detail—the touches of originality and beauty—which gradually became important. Everything that we contemplated introducing had to have meaning as well as

relevance. The run of ecclesiastical furnishings must follow inevitably: communion table, pulpit—font, lectern, minister's and elders' stalls. These were essential in a church, but what we made of them might be different. Before we were ready to present a final scheme which we could both vouch for to the Session, I brightly said to Mervyn Noad: 'Let's get the best sculptor and the best stained-glass-window expert in the West of Scotland. Give me two names, and let's risk it and bring them in.'

He had no hesitation and replied: 'Why not ask Dawson and Baillie? They have the artistic temperament, but they really are artists. They will give you work which is alive and real.'

My first meeting with Archie Dawson was in his studio in a back lane near the Glasgow High School. He arrived late, of course. His workshop represented the nearest thing to chaos—his shyness was frightening. We explained that we wanted some models for a communion table, lectern and pulpit—there were other furnishings but all in good time. We wanted a commingling of life and love and resurrection. We wanted new motifs—none of the usual ecclesiastical symbols—and they had to mix in with the peculiarities of the town, ships and river and the anxious hills behind the church. We put him in Noad's care, drove him to Port Glasgow in spite of his protests—walked him round the town into the shipyards and the church, and up on to the unspoilt hills above. He said nothing at all as we made our tour of inspection. His white, sensitive, sick face still sticks in my memory.

He was to hold us up for weeks. The plans were already drawn but we needed his models to convince the Session. Telephone calls to him were unavailing, so I decided to visit his studio. I caught him unawares, but he showed me what

he had done: a few traditional symbols, full of strength and artistry, but oh, this was not what I had looked for! He took one look at my face, lifted his mallet and smashed with blow after blow what had been born out of his unique creative mind. I will always have a conscience about this because, though I did not know at the time, his life was running out. 'Go away,' he pleaded with me, 'and give me forty-eight hours. I promise to have what you want.'

Two days later I returned in fear and trembling. There he was, white and haggard, standing over a number of models which had only half dried out—the clay was still soft. Almost bitterly he threw at me: 'I have not been out of this dreadful place since last we spoke—God, I'm tired! If this is not what you are after, what in hell do you want?' The sheer loveliness of what he had created left me trembling. For a lectern—instead of a stylized eagle there was the impudent face of a little boy caught in the branches of a tree: on his shoulder was a robin. 'That's my son Benjy. The tree is the Tree of Life—life is holding up the Book of Life—and the robin is thrown in. I like robins, but it has to do, too, with the Crucifixion, and there is no life without crucifixion.'

For the pulpit he had modelled three panels. The centre one was a farmer sowing seed, and I immediately spotted that the hand casting the seed was out of all proportion—twice the size of a normal hand. Dawson must have seen the puzzlement in my eyes—for he quickly said: 'Yes, the hand's out of proportion, but don't you believe in the prodigality of the sower? Isn't that what preaching is meant to be—casting recklessly the good seed? What does it matter? Great handfuls of seed God throws into His world—let it remind you of what preaching ought to be. And I might as well explain what I had in mind with the other two panels. These are mice running

up the wheat stocks to destroy the grain. If you have not yet learned, you soon will, that there are plenty of folk in every congregation who are waiting to destroy the good seed. There's a sermon thrown in for good measure! The other panel is just of wild flowers which I found growing when I walked on the hills above your church. They are attractive and they are local, but they are wild. You'll need the wild ones sometimes to keep you from breaking your heart. If you want a text "the harlots and the publicans go into the Kingdom before you!"'

Everything he had done had a meaning and a story. The *Comet*, the first steamship, was built in Port Glasgow and its designer lay buried in Newark's overgrown graveyard. To balance it, he had modelled the sailing-ship which is the town's coat of arms. The communion table was to have three massive designs cut into solid oak—crown and chalice, passion flower and madonna lily, but with a strength which I have not seen anywhere else. Above each elder's stall was to be an acorn, and over the minister's prayer desk two lively angels at prayer, one of them peeping through his fingers. There was in every model a combination of strength and life, of real things and laughter, of God and man.

These were among the last works of Archie Dawson. His great statue of St Andrew for the exhibition at Bella-houston had been completed, and everyone giving his meed of admiration, but here in forty-eight hours this gifted man had created what he believed about life and God and man and loveliness. Each figure had a story to tell, deeper than most of us knew. The models were carefully packed, and the next day my Kirk Session would see them. My elders were no saints, most of them without a clue about what constituted art, how would they react?

When we met we had our drawings and Dawson's models. True, Tom Fyfe commented on the bad proportions of the farmer's hand, but when I explained the reason, and that my own reaction had been the same, he fell for it. Many a time in the future I was to hear him explaining this with something like awe to visitors and young people—the Prodigality of the Sower—there is nothing niggardly about the Word of God. Everything was passed without question and before the meeting was closed with the Benediction John Cormie rose to his feet and said that he and his brother Peter would like to gift the communion table in memory of their mother.

The work of Archie Dawson lives on in Newark. Perhaps no one will know out of what anguish they were created. Certainly few parish ministers can have experienced what I did in a back-street studio—how near loveliness is to life and death—how prodigal God is in His gifts to men—how true it is that the last can be first in the final reckoning.

Building the Walls

THE story is told of a young minister within this Presbytery whose doctrine was not orthodox, and who was leading his people into new and dangerous ways. A committee of Presbytery met him to examine his beliefs. The Convener was by way of being a theologian, a pundit of the Neo-Calvinist school, and he did most of the questioning. They had not succeeded in breaking through the armour of this gay young man, and the committee had grown rather anxious—was this another abortive heresy hunt? Then the Convener broke in with what he implied was the decisive issue. ‘Would you be prepared to be damned for the glory of Jesus Christ?’

Without any hesitation the young minister replied, ‘Indeed, I would—in fact I would go further, I would be prepared to see this whole Presbytery damned for the glory of Jesus Christ.’

Every young minister has to make up his mind, sooner or later, whether to conform or be a fool for Christ’s sake. The most bitter men in the ministry today are those who have chosen to conform. The gay and the happy ones are those who have been ready to see the Presbytery damned for the greater glory of Christ. Sometimes I think that our theological

training is set to train men to conform rather than to follow the dictates of the living Lord.

I must confess that often in the early days of my ministry I was determined at all costs not to conform. For me it had become a matter of honour, and I trailed my coat more often than I need have. But, sooner or later, you have to make up your mind on which issue it is worth standing your ground. One of my brethren had set himself to protect the purity of doctrine and of the Church by watching my every move. I suffered then, as I suffer now, from a not too accurate account of my speeches and sermons as they appear in the daily or local Press. On the whole I think we have got to accept this, and when sometimes I get angry at what I read I comfort myself with the thought that if I were a newspaper reporter I would have revealed a lot more and made merry hell out of what seemed a dull story.

Mrs Main was a terrific person, flamboyant and unpredictable; she bore down on you like a Spanish galleon in full sail with broadsides blasting. Surely there never were two more unlikely persons to find marriage bliss than Donald and Mrs Main. Donald was the Depute Town Clerk—he had been a colonel in the Argylls in the First World War, had a wonderful war record, was a man of complete integrity and lovable just because of himself. Mrs Main decided that we ought to put on a play to raise funds for our reconstruction. She decided that it should be the morality, *Everyman*.

There was some doubt as to whether this was suitable for a Presbyterian church hall, but in her gallant and completely uninhibited way Mrs Main announced to the local papers that *Everyman* was to be produced. Someone wasted no time and wrote assuring me that if we proceeded with this he would use all his influence to have it boycotted by the town. Without

any hesitation I asked my Session's approval, which was readily granted. Obviously my elders were proud of Donald Main, and it was suggested that I try and persuade him to become an elder. I went to see him, using the excuse of *Everyman*. I don't think I have ever met anyone quite like him. Most of his battalion had been killed or wounded at Gallipoli, and he carried not only wounds in his body but a great sorrow in his heart over the companions whom he had lost. He had never forgotten that experience, and that made him gentle and compassionate to a degree which few men know. Now and again you meet a man whom you trust implicitly. Donald Main was one of these exceptional people. Most often they won't become church officials, but if you can win them they are worth their weight in gold.

I took a rough line and said that he must agree to become an elder. He refused, saying that he was not good enough. All my arguments fell on deaf ears, but I was determined to get him—I went back a second time and still I could not persuade him. Inspired of the devil, I said: 'Look, I am going to call on you every week, and if you will not see me I will sit on your doorstep until you let me in. And all the neighbours will wonder what's wrong.' For five weeks I did this—to be met with a refusal every time. All my blandishments and the support of Mrs Main were of no avail. Finally I made a personal appeal. 'I need you, I want you, please help me.' Reluctantly he agreed to become an elder. He was a treasure and my trusted adviser in many an awkward situation. but he never failed me—and when I think of the dignity of the eldership I think of him.

Mrs Main also decided that I must have a part in *Everyman* and she cast me for 'Death'. Why, I shall never know, except that some of the words which I had to learn had a certain

frightening relevance. She chose Wallace Bennett for the chief role as 'Everyman'. Wallace was a natural actor and had not the war claimed him as a victim he would without any doubt have become one of our few really great Scottish actors. I can't memorize lines, and I was the only weak link in the entire cast. Mrs Main would browbeat me for not knowing my part, and she would never believe that I had a hopeless memory. I would improvise and I would paraphrase, but I could never repeat exactly the words which I had been set to learn.

When *Everyman* was produced, after much preparation, it was a terrific success—even the Glasgow newspapers took note of it and the reviews were good. It was a major achievement for Mrs Main: all her vitality and enthusiasm and dramatic sense had gone into it. In some curious way this was a break-through into the heart of the town. For a week the play dominated the conversation in shipyard, shop and bus queue. For myself I learned how far great acting is from preaching. Sometimes we maintain there is a relation, but there is none. The real preacher is never an actor. He can't be, for he is too involved in something which can never be acted, but only partially shared—the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Mrs Main, in tears but triumphant, told me why she had insisted that I have a part. Nicol Service (then minister of the West Kirk, Greenock) had once told her the story of the minister who had come to these parts—complete with shovel hat and clerical morning coat—this man had an idea that he had to be different from his people. Not long after he had come to his parish he was asked to take part in a play which the young people in his congregation were putting on to raise funds for the church. He hesitated, was reluctant to descend from his high level and make mockery of his high calling. He was

assured that it was a very small part he would have to play. He would be the victim, and all he was required to say was, 'My God, I've been shot!' In the end he agreed to take part, but only on condition that 'My God' was changed to 'My goodness'.

However, the villain of the piece was in fact a humorist. On the night of the play, he had stuffed into the barrel of his pistol a swab of cotton wool dipped in blood which he had obtained from the local butcher. At the crucial moment he fired his pistol and the young minister felt something hit him—and to his horror he saw a blood-red smear on his shirt, at which he cried with unexpected fervour, 'My God, I *have* been shot!' Mrs Main did not believe in pious parsons, but I don't think she realized how well she was casting me. 'Dying to live' is the continuing experience of every parish minister. His preaching only has vitality as he knows 'He has begotten me to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.'

Of course the whole of my week was not occupied with trying to collect money, studying architect's plans and generally eating, drinking and sleeping the reconstruction of Newark. The hundred-and-one duties which a young parish minister has to discover and learn were the pattern and pace of each day. The reconstruction however was a symbol, the point of growth, the focus of activity and fellowship.

Every congregation needs a growing point if it is to come really alive and every ministry ought to have its distinctive emphasis. To believe that maintaining a tradition is the work of the Holy Spirit is to misunderstand completely the on-going work of God. How many useful and original ministries have been ruined or frustrated because members of congregations imagine that the will of God is a blueprint delivered with the building when it was erected, and that it is sin to depart

from it. The fact is, however, that a living church is always in a state of reform, always discovering new ways, always embarking on new experiments. A church dies when it becomes set in its ways, static and unwilling to adapt or change. Even if the building is full every Sunday morning and evening, it is still dying, maybe of worldly success.

When John Cormie reminded the Kirk Session about being 'ready for adventure' he did the one thing necessary to bring youth and age together. Fortunately, these thirty years ago, the Church still had men and young people—it had not developed into a religious club for women and a Sunday school for children. Probably there will always be tension between youth and age, and there will always be those who protest that too much is being done for the young. It is the normal attitude of those who fear to leave the beaten and familiar paths. Adventure in Christian living needs the robust guidance of experience to set direction, but without the vitality, enthusiasm and recklessness of youth no destination is reached and nothing accomplished.

I took for granted that the Willie Fyfes, Arthur Pows, George Patons, Jimmy Toshs, Duncan Chestnutts, Margaret Enslies, Margaret Crowes just because they were young would weigh in, and I don't think I ever heard a complaint that too much was being done for the young. Age and youth somehow found a meeting place in Newark, and it was fun. I wonder what went wrong in my later parishes to make them groups at enmity with one another?

One of the first bold enterprises with the young folk was accomplished under cover of darkness. It was discovered that the piece of ground abutting on the graveyard, which we wanted to remove to make room for the chapel and choir room to be built, could not be touched without permission

of the General Trustees. Everything was moving smoothly towards that end when one bright citizen, hearing what we were at, started the story that this piece of ground had been used for a mass grave during a plague of typhus in the later part of the eighteenth century. True, there had been a plague—the old huts at Clune Brae, now used as isolation wards by the local health authorities, were supposed originally to have housed the victims of the plague. There were no records to show where they had been buried, and only hearsay pointed to Newark graveyard. It looked as if we would be held up indefinitely, because the Trustees now asked for an official declaration from us that this piece of ground had never been used for burial. Suddenly it dawned on us that the obvious thing to do was to dig and find out—but how to do this without starting an outcry in the town—suppose there were graves?

One night, when the town was silent and asleep, a number of us with spades and shovels set to and started to dig under the direction of Arthur Pow, a first-year medical student. We posted look-outs round the graveyard. Our digging quickly disclosed that there could have been no graves. Except for a foot of soil, the bank was of solid clay as hard as stone. We had the information we needed—how now to persuade the Kirk Session to have an official dig? The next day I called on a number of my elders and informed them what we had done. What about getting big Bill Anderson, the contractor, to sink a shaft, just to prove what we had discovered?

A Session Meeting had been convened for the following week to make arrangements for the Quarterly Communion. I had found to my dismay on coming to Newark that a section of the congregation used individual communion cups. True, only a minority had been won to this unhappy and divisive

practice. Was it worth upsetting the unity and peace of the congregation by demanding that we should get rid of individual cups? On all sides I was advised to leave well alone at this stage. James Dick gave me the pointer to what might be the sensible way to deal with the situation. I had been pressing to have celebrations of Holy Communion on the major feast days of the Christian year. Why not leave the Quarterly Communions as at present, and seek permission to use only the common cup at Christmas, Easter and Pentecost? I put this plan before the elders and, after lengthy discussion, it was agreed for an experimental period to do this and to dispense with communion cards on these special occasions. I never regretted this way of dealing with a problem which must worry many ministers today who find themselves in a similar position. As the years passed, fewer and fewer were won to the individual cup. I advised all my young communicants to take the common cup and, if the Quarterly Communion services became less meaningful, the other occasions consolidated and deepened the life of the congregation.

At the close of this important and difficult meeting I brightly suggested that we might agree to having an area of the ground, which we wanted to have removed from the graveyard, tested by the building contractor. With dead-pan faces the elders agreed. The excavation was carried out openly over the next few days and the nocturnal labours of the young people amply justified by the results. The bank was of solid clay. Now all was set; the moment we received the Trustees' permission, the first stage in the building operation could begin.

I am getting anxious a little, because there is so much that I have missed out, and so many people whom I ought to

have mentioned. Still, I want to get to the completion of the building operations, for that was the first great landmark in my ministry, the fulfilling of a dream but also the end of a chapter. Once all the contracts had been fixed and the work begun, it meant that each day after breakfast I was down at the church to see how matters were progressing. And I made it a point of honour to be down pretty early on, for I had the feeling that part of myself was being built in with the brick and mortar, and something of myself was being shaped by every blow of the stone-mason's hammer as he deftly prepared the stone facings.

Stone-masons are hard to find nowadays. We were lucky to get our hands on one of the few left in the county. He loved his work: the way he handled the stone which he shaped marked him out, too, as a craftsman. One morning from under his tarpaulin awning he hailed me. 'I've been thinking, your job and mine are not much different. I have to shape stone, you have to shape people. Some bits of stone take more handling than others, you've got to take more care—some bits run with the chisel and shape themselves. Some of the stone blocks act to hold the strains and stresses, others are there to be seen, you've got to be at a lot of pains with these. Yes, I've been thinking that you have a bit of a sermon there. Didn't St Paul write about the Church being stones, fitted and shaped together?'

Many a talk we had, and there was little that missed him. On mornings when I was later than usual he would pull me up with the question, 'You're slow in starting today?'

I wonder if we ministers, especially when we are beginning our ministry, realize how closely we are watched by 'our folk. They can tell our every mood, when we are happy and when we are distressed. They know when we are prepared and when

we are careless. Week after week they watch and they know how we are making out. Without that warm and affectionate concern we grow bitter and harsh, with it even our glaring weaknesses are covered. I found, however, that while they could be lenient in so many ways, they had little patience with our misuse of time. For too long the impression has been abroad that our times of hard work are at a week-end and that during the week we are free to do what we like. They know if we get up late and are slow to get moving, and all our attempts to give the impression of busyness fail to convince. The right use of our time is one of the many lessons we have to learn as we make our mistakes in our first parish. Of course, there are a lot of things we do which occupy our time, but how many of them are truly necessary? Perhaps we have to get straight our priorities again. Certainly my stone-mason never failed to pull me up and I needed it.

It is important also to take time off. I have never been able to learn this lesson sufficiently, and other people have suffered as a result. Father Keane regularly rang me up and took me in his car to visit outlandish monasteries and parish priests in lonely places. It would mean a walk, too, but also the discovery of the loyalty that exists in the fraternity of the priesthood. Simon, of course, was ready to justify every sinner, and most were to him 'saints of God'. Once he said, 'God loves the ordinary people, He made so many of them.' And once when he was defending some blatant sinner in his flock he added, 'Look at our Lord's first disciples—every one was a bad un.'

We suffer in the Kirk from a lack of basic loyalty to one another. Our individualism has destroyed our corporateness, and our unnecessary and often unseemly competition for converts to our congregations marks out this tragic weakness. Our presbyteries should be first of all rich and deeply rooted

fellowships before they are courts of the Church. Our decisions would be so vastly different if we accepted this.

As the work proceeded and the money came in steadily, with Sir James matching pound with pound as the congregation contributed, we began to turn our thoughts to the day of re-dedication and opening. Meantime, we had moved into Old Port Glasgow Parish Church for joint services while Newark was out of order. It was while preaching one Sunday that I began to recognize that I had been driving myself harder than was wise. Towards the end of the sermon my words began to stumble and I had difficulty in finishing. It was a frightening experience, and the congregation knew that something was wrong. Years before when I was an arts student I had been asked to address the Divinity Hall on work I was doing in the Dumbiedykes area with a boys' club. I began confidently enough, but after two minutes I lost my nerve, no sound came from my lips, no matter how hard I tried, I could not continue. I was in fact speechless. To make matters worse, I had been entertained to lunch and had been given half an hour to speak with the remainder of the hour for questions. It was a disastrous introduction to public speaking, and often I used to wonder and worry whether I should ever have the nerve to preach. For long enough it was a kind of nightmare shadow at the back of my mind.

Dr Connell took me in hand. He never came to church, but he had a great deal more compassion, sympathy and understanding than most of us who did. He had trained as a school-teacher, and then thrown up his job to become a doctor. His precise manner was a cloak to his kindness and gift for friendship. I owe him far more than the bills which he never sent me, for without his care and common sense I might never have preached again. When I was to be invalided out of the

army at the end of the war in Europe, with the advice that I seek a quiet country parish and never on any account preach more than once a week, in characteristic fashion he said, 'Nonsense, in six months we'll have you doing more than you have ever done—there's nothing wrong which we can't put right.' His optimism and confidence were again and again to reassure me, and dispel the dark clouds which on occasion would obscure my horizon.

The next week he packed me off for a holiday. I did not like holidays and most times resisted taking them. How foolish can we be, when we think everything depends on our efforts and that without us the work can't go on? It took me a long time to learn the foolishness of my ways. Dr Connell then waylaid some of my elders and a conspiracy was hatched between them to keep me on a tighter rein.

There was one last battle to be fought before we could set a date for a Service of Re-Dedication. It had been decided that the wall in the chancel behind the communion table would be draped with a rich blue-and-gold curtain. We had looked at tapestries, had even sent to France for samples, before deciding on this particular design. Still I was not convinced that this was quite right. For all the colour there was something lacking. Then the inspiration came—why not have made a great massive wooden cross and fix it there? I put the idea to the group of men I had gathered round me in the congregation to take the place of what had once been a Men's Guild. Without hesitation they offered to pay for the Cross and, thus armoured, I approached the Kirk Session to have their consent.

We immediately ran into heavy weather—there was a strong body of opinion against what they called papist symbols. I argued, I pleaded, but without avail. We had come a long way, but a limit had apparently been reached. In desperation

I made a last effort: Would they not agree to accept this gift and have it put up for the opening service? I promised that if any of the congregation complained or objected it would be immediately taken down and they could have my resignation forthwith. I did not mean it to be a threat, but the Cross had become for me the symbol of what the whole enterprise had meant: it focussed what makes and keeps the Church alive—the empty Cross of the Risen Christ. With kindly forbearance, the elders acceded to my request; even at the end it would be a test of faith.

I asked George MacLeod to come and preach and rededicate the Restored and Renovated Newark. He prepared an Order of Service for us, and parts of it had the inspiration which is his own peculiar gift. It was scribbled on bits of paper which I sent to my sister in Edinburgh to type for me.

All was now set. My parents came through from Edinburgh to stay in the manse. The workmen who had shared in the work were given special pews, and the leading officials of the town had been invited. On the Saturday night I stood alone in the empty church. What a transformation! Light and life and beauty spoke back to me. Throughout the months never once had I doubted that this was what God intended me to do to make lovely His House in this parish. If I had doubted for a moment, nothing could or would have been accomplished. Something of myself had gone into this building; maybe something, too, of me had died in it.

On the Sunday morning I awakened to find that I had developed a heavy cold, and to my disappointment my voice had disappeared almost to a whisper. I could take no part in the Service.

George did everything quite perfectly. One passage from

his sermon expresses with impressive clarity what a number of us in the ministry believed at this time:

‘And so it is today that I stand here, to thank you for the most profound encouragement you give to me at least, to congratulate you—if that be no impertinence—on what so splendidly and lavishly you have done. There never was a time when justice was more needed, nor mercy. There never was a time when our whole economic structure required more searching scrutiny. And you do the one supremely necessary thing if either are to be proceeded with at all. You have proclaimed for all to see that primarily you love Jesus and are jealous for the good name of His House. When all that has been said, is the Church of Scotland going to get back to its one essential purpose—that is, the primary duty of the Church to worship? When is the Church of Scotland going to wake to the truth that it is that which men outside are really waiting to see us do again? When are we going to return to the central emphasis of our own forefathers? Things are all so different—and you have seen it—but how many there are who do not see it yet! Let none of you be misled by superficial criticism. Think not to say that your fathers and forefathers did not do the things you do today. They made worship the centre of their purpose. Yes, and in finest buildings too. You may say the churches of our fathers were simple affairs. And so they were, but what think you that this church looked like when it was built? Surrounded by thatched cottages and low-roofed houses—what a resplendent place this was in their mind’s eye when first they planned it! But how different are our surroundings today! Are we to be content with simple churches, when all around us the forces of education

and secularism put up schools and picture houses that shame our dull monotonies? I tell you this, our fathers and forefathers would not have been content. We do not break with their tradition, but we accomplish for our day what they did for theirs.'

After the Service we had asked Sir James and Lady Lithgow to come and meet George. I feel sure that this was their first meeting face to face. I don't think George had as yet hatched the idea of the Iona Community.

No complaint or objection was made about the Cross. Congregation and Session were proudly happy and enormously relieved.

Two Sundays later I fainted as I pronounced the Benediction, and the next few months were to test us, minister and congregation, almost to breaking point. Some Sundays all would go well—on others I would falter and find difficulty with my words. On one occasion I had to give up preaching after a few minutes—words would not come. It was an anxious and exhausting time for my people, and yet the attendance at Service never fell off. Instinctively they felt that my recovery of confidence depended on them more than on anything else. Dr Connell, with deep perception, would not allow me to give in, and most Sundays he was standing by lest anything should happen. Specialists had been brought in to examine my heart, but they agreed that nothing was wrong with it. My confidence did not come back quickly and I found preaching week by week a heavy burden. It was only the affection of my people, their calmness and readiness to put up with me, that slowly led me out of this testing experience—maybe it was what the mystics call the dark night of the soul. I have never dared to look back over the notes of my sermons

throughout this period—perhaps I destroyed them in shame. The terror of preaching is something which every minister has to learn sooner or later. I was told once of a pulpit in a small country church. Round its upper ledge, visible to the congregation, were carved the words of our Lord, ‘Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls.’ Within the pulpit, visible only to the preacher, some desperate soul had gouged out the words, ‘How dreadful is this place, this is none other than the House of God.’

In 1938 I met Betty Thom. I had been asked to a supper party to make up an even number. It was the most important meeting of my life and the great turning point in my ministry. Betty, with her golden-red hair, immediately captivated me. How one falls in love I shall never be able to discover and explain. It happens and you are never the same again. I could hardly wait to see her again. A part of me was afraid and mystified. How do you set about winning the love of someone you need absolutely? By great good fortune I ran into Liston Carnie, who was then civil engineer to Port Glasgow and had just been responsible for the amazing waterfall which was the centre-piece of the Bellahouston Exhibition. Would I like to see over the exhibition? This was my chance: Could I bring a young lady with me? Liston showed no surprise or covered it up pretty well and answered, ‘Of course.’ Dorothy, his wife, could come and we might have dinner together.

Then and there I telephoned Betty and to my delight she accepted. It was a wonderful night, though Liston seemed to me to over-monopolize my friend. He took us under the waterfalls, explaining the technical details as to how they worked, and we had dinner. Liston, however, had time to whisper, ‘She’s too good for you.’ I knew it then and know it

now. One day I must read the letters I sent to her in the weeks that followed. One of them came into my hands the other day—dated November of that year. How one could write such pompous stuff leaves me shaken! Full of my parish and my problems, and even a small sermon added for good measure at the end. What could she have thought about such an approach? I once heard her tell one of our daughters that I never once sent her a real love-letter before we were married. I hope I have sent some since those vivid days. I did not know how to ask her to marry me. Finally, I plucked up courage and invited her to a football game in Edinburgh.

On the way back to Glasgow by train I tried to say what I wanted to say—I know I did it badly. Betty assures me that I just told her that I wanted to marry her—and how soon could we be married?—and then changed the conversation. Anyway, she did not say no outright. It was arranged that I call on her parents. Again, how silly can one become when in love? I brought George MacLeod and Duncan MacGillivray with me to vouch for me in case difficulties arose.

At the appropriate moment, my father-in-law to be invited me to have a talk in his study. I shudder to think what I may have said in justification. I wanted to marry his daughter: I could offer her £450 a year and a manse and a lovely church building, and please could we be married right away, without any fuss?—I never liked weddings very much. Upstairs George and Duncan did their best to give me a character.

The announcement of our engagement was made in the newspapers and instead of finding my parish surprised I discovered that for weeks they had known that I was in love and who the lady was; at least that is what I was led to believe. My people were delighted and expressed the hope that we would be married in Newark. Some little time after this

announcement Betty and I were walking along Princes Street when we ran into John Lockie. Quite unabashed, he said: 'So you are the brave girl! Harry once boasted that if ever he got married he would have eleven sons to make up a football team.' Everyone we met expressed sympathy with Betty and told me how lucky I was.

We were married in June on a lovely warm Saturday in Newark by George MacLeod and W. J. Smith. The whole town turned out and everywhere there was genuine happiness—they took Betty to their hearts and it was the last really joyous occasion the town was to share in for four long years—three months later war was declared.

G. K. Chesterton wrote of one of his books, 'This is not an ecclesiastical treatise but a sort of slovenly autobiography.' This is not meant to be even a slovenly autobiography—it is the attempt to isolate the people and events in my parishes which uplifted my heart, made me laugh and taught me my job. I have left out a great deal which ought to have been included, the heart-breaks and disappointments, the failures and the defects, the folk who got in my hair and taught me some patience. Mostly too I have made only passing reference by name to my own contemporaries—they are too close to me still to venture an assessment and rouse hard feelings. Anyway, the time to write about contemporaries is when one at last has had the courage to step sideways with grace and with dignity. To turn over the past without bitterness is a quality which few of us have, and then it is there only by grace.

The Wearisome Years

I GRUDGED the war years. Mine was an inglorious war, and by the end of it a bitter experience. When I told my congregation in an unsteady voice that Sunday morning of the Prime Minister's declaration that 'we are at war', I knew there was no escape from that terrible dilemma. 'Where does my duty lie?' Every parish minister of military age must have felt it. Was it to remain with your people and uphold and sustain them through the dark days ahead—or was it to be with the men who had to do the fighting?

True, I had a thickly populated parish in a vulnerable area on the Clyde. Most of my men, too, who worked in the now busy shipyards were in reserved occupations. I put my problem to the Session and they were sympathetic, but inclined to the view that my immediate duty was to stay at home. I wished then, and pressed hard for it, that ministers should not be exempt from military service but that they should have been called up in their age group. It was a mistake to give us special exemption at this stage, and the dilemma which so many of us have for so long refused to face would have then become an existential either/or, and today the Church's voice would have been more distinct. Eventually I made what turned out to be a compromise decision, and because of it I had an uneasy

conscience until the end of the war. As ministers of the Gospel we had no claim to privileged or special treatment, and the arguments used to justify such a claim seemed to me then specious and unchristian. The net result was that, because of this special treatment, most of us became morale boosters rather than preachers of the Word of God.

I found I could go for a short period under the Church's Huts and Canteens to be with the British Forces in France. A team of us volunteered to start a hut for Scottish troops in the Lille area. It gave us the sense that at least we were alongside our men and able to offer them some creature comforts. For me it was an unsatisfactory commitment: I knew I could get home whereas the chaplains were under orders for the duration. From my conversations with the chaplains whom I did meet in France, they left no doubt in my mind that they considered us lucky fellows, some of them even despised us.

Again, I was one of the fortunate ones. When the Germans overran Belgium, and started their sweep through France, I was on my way to Le Havre. By good luck, and because I was one of the privileged ones, room was found for me on one of the last destroyers to get out of Le Havre. The signs of panic were too distinct to miss, the disasters which led to Dunkirk were apparent, but I got home in safety. My first son was born in Port Glasgow as I was making for the French coast in the gathering chaos. This short-lived adventure did nothing to resolve my dilemma or ease my conscience.

What a joy it was to get back to the manse to find Betty well and a solemn small son. We called him Edward Harry. Immediately it meant catching up again with parish duties. A rigid black-out had now been imposed, and it meant a temporary end to evening services when the nights began to lengthen. We had a passage in the cellars below the manse

shored up to make an air-raid shelter. Damp and fusty, it gave us no real assurance of protection, but whenever the sirens sounded of a night it meant rushing down with Edward in his moses basket to this pretence retreat. Meg had come out of her retirement from family service to look after us in the manse just before I left for France. What a treasure she was to prove! And each night she trotted down with us into the shelter. We were prepared for the worst.

I had become an air-raid warden on my return. The post to which I was allotted of a night was in Kingston Shipyard. A brick shelter had been hastily rushed into existence, but with all the necessary gadgets in the event of fire breaking out in the yard from incendiary bombs. For the first time I was to see a shipyard close up. Each night we made a tour of the sheds and berths, met the men on night shift and talked.

Here the seeds of a later enterprise were sown. At night men speak freely and I began to discover why the iron had entered the souls of so many shipyard workers on the Clyde. It wasn't only the harsh years of depression, but the conditions of work and the relations between worker and management. Years of bitterness and misunderstanding had created suspicion and mistrust, the war had made simply an uneasy truce. Each night I was on duty I would have a word with the old gate-man. He could remember the days when wooden ships were built. When I asked him to tell me the difference between those far-off days and the present he answered: 'Once iron men came in here to build wooden ships, today wooden men come to build iron ships. Once men came here to build ships, now they come to collect pay pokes.'

As the winter nights drew in, fewer and fewer people were seen on the streets. Black-outs were fixed and most families stayed within doors. Rumours were abroad that it was not safe

to be outside after dark, for there was talk of bag-snatchings and assaults. It meant, of course, the end of all evening organizations. Hugh Crowe, like myself, had an uneasy conscience. He worked at the Torpedo Factory in Greenock, was one of the key men, but he could not rid his mind of the horror these weapons of destruction would cause. He could not square his Christian beliefs with what he was doing. When he found it intolerable he sought my advice—he must give up his job. I dissuaded him, putting up one argument only, that this was one of the intolerable dilemmas Christians have to face and accept in war. He was not convinced, but he did not give up his job.

The Sunday after this conversation he came into my vestry with a smile on his face. Hugh's smile was sometimes seraphic. 'Here's a story for you, if you haven't got a sermon this morning. Last Friday night I was coming home late, I couldn't see a thing. Suddenly I was aware that I was being followed. If I hurried the steps behind me hurried, if I slowed down the steps behind me slowed down. Soon I was in a panic, my pay was in my pocket—someone had waited for me, knowing it was pay night. At last I reached the steps which run up from Mackie Avenue and I simply raced up them, but the steps behind me grew quicker and quicker until I felt the thief almost breathing down my neck. Completely out of breath I reached the top, and turned to meet my fate. "What do you want?" I cried out in terror. Out of the darkness and right beside me a child's voice said through sobs, "I was frightened, mister, and wanted to stay near you." It was a little girl. I discovered that she had been visiting her grannie, and had stayed later than she had meant to. Her parents lived in the next street and, with her hand in mine, I took her home.' Hugh was like that, and he lived a better sermon than I ever preached.

I felt I must do something about Sunday evenings. The idea came to me that if we could black out the church we could gather the town together for an act of worship. We could organize groups with torches to see one another home. This hiding behind doors was not good for morale and an opportunity was needed for people to meet, especially as Sunday work had cut down attendance at church considerably. First I went to John Cormie: Would he pay for material to black out the windows of Newark? And I explained what I was after. Yes, he would do it, making only the stipulation that the material be seemly and fitted in such a way as not to detract from the beauty of the building. Next I sought an interview with Henry Lithgow. James and Henry Lithgow were utterly unlike each other. James was a dynamic, driving force, a born leader of men; Henry was shy, retiring, but acknowledged up and down the Clyde as having the finest shipbuilding mind on the whole stretch of the river. They made the perfect team—all important decisions relating to the industry were joint decisions. Henry and I so far had kept each other at arm's length. The brothers did not believe in discussing each other's charitable works and Henry suspected parsons—they were always after money.

However, he arranged to meet me at the East Yard. His room, small, sparsely furnished—a couple of prints of pheasants on the walls, a table and two chairs, and the inevitable Lithgow battery of telephones. I explained that I wanted to run a series of Services of Praise on Sunday nights, to draw the people in and to have people moving about on a Sunday evening, to stop this growing fear of the darkness. I wanted to bring the best musicians and have the best music, so that it would all add up to a joyful service of praise. If I could offer fees to such musicians I felt sure I could persuade them to come to the

THE WEARISOME YEARS

Port, and of course we would have to lay on adequate transport. What seemed to worry him most was not the cost, but would the people come? I assured him that they would. We struck a bargain. I should arrange for the finest music and he would pay to have it brought to Port Glasgow, but if the people did not attend the deal was off. I should come and see him every Monday morning and report.

I discovered this old faded Service of Praise in my desk recently:

RECITAL OF MUSIC

J. Wight Henderson	..	Piano
Peggie Sampson	..	'Cello

Peggie Sampson

Toccata	Frescobaldi
---------	----	----	----	-------------

Melody	Gluck
--------	----	----	----	-------

J. Wight Henderson

Variations in F Minor	Haydn
-----------------------	----	----	-------

Sonata in G Minor	Scarlatti
-------------------	----	----	-----------

J. Wight Henderson and Peggie Sampson

Sonata in A Major Op. 69	..	Beethoven
--------------------------	----	-----------

It was typical of what happened each Sunday evening during that winter of black-out. Newark was well filled on most occasions and crowded on some. The organization of torch-light parties was great fun. No one was allowed to go home alone, and we began to feel that we were breaking the black-out. The police arranged each Sunday to have a man

on duty at a police box beside the church, in direct touch with the Air Raid Centre, so that we would have immediate notice of an alarm.

On Monday morning I met Henry Lithgow with a note of expenses. His first question was always, 'How many people?' His interest grew, and I think he enjoyed doing this. He must have enjoyed his own private joke. Lady Lithgow had been calling at the manse—she and Betty had become firm allies. 'What have you been doing with brother Henry? I hear you have persuaded him to become the patron to your Services on Sunday evenings. You know, of course, that he is tone deaf and hates music of all kinds.'

Lady Lithgow was always at hand during these early war years. She would burst into the manse at the most unexpected moment—stay and have us laughing at the latest story of the Port, and then eat whatever was going. How we valued her friendship and her humour!

We got through this winter in better shape than we had expected. The holocaust of bombing had not come, and the town had broken free from that first grip of fear which the black-out brought.

Meantime, I was feeling my way in Kingston Shipyard. At night I would question how ships were built, what were riveters, platers and caulkers? I learned of grievances, and soon I had a picture of managers, under-managers and foremen. The truth, as I saw it, was that in the past there had not been nearly enough contact direct between the Lithgow brothers and the workers. True, James had his beloved Artillery, of which he had been colonel in the First War, but contact with most of the workers was through the medium of managers and foremen. The prevailing attitude was that men were there to build ships in the quickest and most economical way. The

job of the owners was to get contracts, the workers to produce the goods. There were strikes and stoppages for what seemed to me the strangest reasons. Soon I was to learn how strange. Rumours that a strike was brewing began to filter to our air-raid shelter in the yard. The whole thing seemed to me unreasonable, and I believed that if the right people met the right people all difficulties could be ironed out, given common sense and trust. And, anyway, to strike in war was not playing the game.

The importance of this impending strike for me was it taught me not only how dangerous it is to attempt the role of mediation in industrial disputes but also how childish and stubborn the negotiating parties can become—face-saving is an understatement. When the strike broke it was over lines of demarcation, the bugbear of shipbuilding in an age of technical development and automation. In any case, matters ought not to have been allowed to drift on until one side had to make a stand. I asked, and was allowed, to be present when management and shop stewards met in an effort to avoid a stoppage.

Both sides were perfectly polite to each other, but it was obvious that no ground would be given either way. I had the feeling that the whole sorry business would never have arisen had there been a measure of trust and confidence between unions and management. Even then it was my opinion that the mechanics of industrial relations were reminiscent of the Dark Ages. Negotiations from positions of strength, and not out of common sense and plain justice, make economics the chess of the devil. It still is the prevailing philosophy in great areas of industry today, in spite of the fact that the writing is on the wall for our nation so far as world trade is concerned.

The town folk were not in favour of the strike. Apart from the fact that families had sons serving with the Forces,

there had been a series of sinkings by enemy submarines which began to make our nation's position very precarious. Sir James Lithgow had been appointed by Winston Churchill as Minister of Shipbuilding, and he was perforce located in London for the duration of the war. It even seemed disloyal that his firm should be withholding its labour. The strike leaders were aware that sympathy in the town was not for them, and a mass rally was arranged for the coming Sunday evening in the Town Hall to enlist public support.

I had the not very original idea of trying to persuade Henry Lithgow to intervene. He invited me to come out to the Drums on the Saturday afternoon for tea and 'bring your wife, the gooseberries are ripe in the garden'. So out we went. It was my first visit to the Drums. It had been the home of William Lithgow, the founder of the firm, and Henry had stayed on after the marriage of James and Gwen, who had set up home at Gleddoch. Right in the centre of the terrace in front of the house was something that looked like a cylindrical sentry-box. It overlooked a stretch of the river, and we discovered that Henry used it as a look-out tower whenever there was an air-raid.

We had tea and he was in every way charming and at his ease. Betty and he immediately established contact. Betty's uncle Ernest and Henry had been pupils in the same form at Glasgow Academy. Stories were exchanged and the clock was turned back a good many years. Ernest had told us that Henry had more than his fair share of brains and that everything came easy to him. Henry played up beautifully. One of Ernest's apocryphal stories was that Henry could recite from memory the whole of the Book of Psalms. We knew he was credited with having a prodigious memory, but we hardly believed this tale. But yes, he admitted that at one time

he could pretty nearly recite all the Psalms. His father turned them out to church every Sunday, the sermons were long and dreich, and the boy Henry had whiled away the long minutes learning the Psalms by heart.

All the time I was looking for an opportunity to bring up the vexed subject which was the occasion for our visit, but with tantalizing adroitness he kept steering us away from it. Now we must go and see the garden and sample the gooseberries. Betty played up equally beautifully—I think she really enjoyed the gooseberry episode. Certainly it looked, as we ate quantities of the largest gooseberries I've ever seen, as if none of us had a care in the world. Then Henry recalled his meetings with my wife's grandfather Sugar Wilson on the 'sugar train' from Glasgow. Yes, he was known as Long Wilson and he had an impressive beard.

Story after story and incident after incident were recalled. Betty and Henry were away off my beam, and what about my mission? It looked as if we would never get round to it. Then quite suddenly he looked me up and down. 'Well, what do you expect me to do about the strike?' Like a dammed sluice suddenly released, I poured out my theories and my impressions. I believed that if he would see the strike leaders himself matters could be quickly straightened out. I had in mind to attend the meeting in the Town Hall, and if I could say that he was ready to meet the strikers then perhaps the deadlock could be broken. 'Right,' he said, 'go ahead and try it, but I can tell you now what the result will be—you'll get run out the hall for your pains.' As quickly as that it was decided, and I was fully convinced that I held a trump card. Henry once again devoted his attention to Betty, showed her his look-out tower, and grumbled that his housekeeper and doctor were doing their best to have it removed and to stop

him going out in the middle of the night to view the Jerry planes. We never again were to visit the Drums, but we had seen another side to Henry and what we had seen we liked very much.

As soon as I could, that very evening, I called on the strike leader with the news that Mr Henry was ready to meet them. Would he not be persuaded to bring his colleagues and hold such a meeting? He hedged for a bit, saying that nothing could come of such a meeting, but he was there to find a satisfactory solution to his fellow workers' problems, and it would not be said of him that he closed any door of possible negotiation. Would he then agree to tell the men at the gathering in the Town Hall that a fresh line of negotiation was possible, and perhaps it would mean the end of the strike? He agreed.

On the Sunday evening I slipped into the back of the Town Hall. The platform held most of the heavy artillery from the unions. Preliminary speeches were made by lesser lights in the union hierarchy to soften up the meeting. Then the strike leader took the floor. He had ability and he knew how to sway the men who sat there row upon row and with their caps on. I waited for the announcement which I felt sure would come. Instead, I listened to a tirade against those who were trying to undermine the solidarity of the workers, especially a local minister whose interference was unnecessarily prolonging the strike. I could hardly believe my own ears. Loud cheers announced the end of his speech. He then called on one or two delegates from the upper reaches of the river who appealed for solidarity and a continuation of the strike—they could assure the men of the moral support of their brothers in other yards.

I felt defeated, ashamed and angry. Then the chairman

asked if there were any comments from the floor of the hall. Immediately a familiar figure got up—my old ally of the abortive visit to the M.P. when I first came to Newark. Fearlessly, he attacked the whole idea of the strike and called on the men to return to work. He was greeted with hoots and laughter. The men were in no mood to listen to him. Before I was aware of it I was running down the centre passage-way and up on to the platform. I was greeted with a few cheers and then a cold silence descended on the crowd. What was I up to? Nervously, I began to tell them that I had seen Mr Lithgow and that he was ready to meet with their leaders. In a moment pandemonium was let loose. I yelled above the noise, appealing to their patriotism, but it was no use. Obviously they had taken the bait, I was ‘the interfering minister’. I got down off the platform amid calls and boos—it was one of the longest walks I’ve ever had. Sick with disappointment and fear, I was booed all the way to the door.

If I had learned a lesson I had also made up my mind that I would see more of what went on in a shipyard. Henry was right, but how did he know?

It was obvious that I had been caught out on a limb. The right, and indeed the duty, of the parish minister to concern himself with all that goes on in the parish had been largely forgotten. His job was, in the eyes of congregation and community alike, to look after his flock in spiritual matters, baptize the children, marry the young couples, bury the dead and for the rest keep the peace. A number of factors contributed to this narrow interpretation of the Church’s function. The individualism which grew out of Protestantism gave birth to the various denominations, all of which had to make a living, and they tended to build their temples of worship in the better residential areas. Competition was inevitable, and

a minister's life more and more became that of maintaining the organization, and keeping sweet the members of his flock who in the end of the day made possible his bread-and-butter. Men had to trim their sails to keep their people.

The Disruption in Scotland was the heaviest blow of all to the parish economy of the Kirk. Two churches, three, four, five, now stood in the parishes where the people had formerly looked to one building as the centre of the religious and communal life. The union of the Churches in 1929 was hailed as the God-given opportunity to discover again the parish system. The progress has been slow, although union and readjustments have considerably cut down the number of church buildings in Scotland. There has, however, been as yet no realist redrawing of parish areas. More serious was the hangover in the ministry of those who had neither been trained nor wanted to look beyond their congregations to the life that beat about their doors. This was not considered a first priority. We sanctified what had become little more than congregationalism into what we now piously called 'the gathered Church'. We salved our consciences by saying that the population explosion had so destroyed the old parish economy that nothing could bring it back. That acceptance is still tragically all too prevalent.

The strike, and my naïve attempt to find a settlement, had come out of a growing conviction that my ministry was equally to the shipyards as to the folk whose names appeared on my communion roll. It had led me into troubled waters, but I had taken a first step to underline that I had been inducted to a parish. The plain reason why Henry Lithgow could predict events was that he knew more about my parish than I did, and more about the working of the minds of the men who were my parishioners than either I or my Session did.

My next step was to seek official entry into the shipyards, and within a few months I was to become the first industrial chaplain on the Clyde.

The hotting-up of the German bombing of this country delayed the plans which had begun to take shape in my imagination. The shipyards would have to wait yet awhile. As the year wore on, enemy raids became more frequent. Night after night we had to pull ourselves out of sleep and take cover in shelters. Then came the raids which were intended to wipe out the Clyde. One night the sirens sounded early, and by the noise overhead we knew that a heavy bomber force was upon us. Greenock and Port Glasgow had its worst night of terror, which few of us who were out on the streets will forget. Almost everywhere incendiaries had fallen, but miraculously the shipyards on this narrow ledge mostly escaped severe damage.

I had been summoned to the Carnegie area, where a shelter had taken a direct hit. It was a tragic business, trying to break through the rubble to get at what life still remained. Father Keane had joined me and we did our best with the injured. Until dawn the rescue teams worked away, and as the first streaks of daylight appeared we knew that there had been many casualties. On both sides of the river burning buildings could be seen, as if to defy the light of a new day. Many bodies had still to be identified, and the badly wounded comforted, and news of them taken to relatives. Father Keane and I set off together to the hospital, and together we went round the injured. It was not prearranged, simply we naturally found each other's company necessary. Then to the temporary mortuary, where the blasted and broken bodies of the dead were laid out in rows covered with sheets of tarpaulin. We stood with the bereaved as body after body was identified,

and spoke our inadequate words of sympathy or muttered a prayer.

All morning we did this. How terrible is modern war! Can it ever be justified?

Two events in that week stand out for me. My Halls had been turned into a temporary shelter for the homeless. A land-mine had exploded just below Bouverie and the blast had done considerable damage to the tenements. I had gone up to help direct those whose homes had been damaged down to Newark. Word went round that an old woman was trapped in her single end. A squad got busy digging away at the rubble and eventually the old lady was brought out into the street. I put her in my car and, as we drove down the hill, she made no mention of the loss of her little home, then suddenly she turned to me in despair. 'I've noo nae teeth and nae corsets, whatna good is an old woman wi' nae teeth and nae corsets?' When I was able to reassure her that teeth and corsets could be easily come by she relaxed. Everything she possessed had been destroyed.

That summer, too, our first daughter was born. We called her Elizabeth Alice. Two years later there was Mary Muir.

With astonishing speed and resilience, the town recovered. Many of the children were evacuated and some of the women-folk. It became very much a man's community, and all our normal church organizations and sundry services just wound up. I was free, as I had never been before, to become involved in the life of the town. We were all thrown together and all nervously reacting to what we had experienced, and apprehensive of what the future might bring. I think I began to get a glimmer of the real meaning of the priesthood of all believers: not that every man is his own priest, but that every

man is a priest to his neighbour. We were anxious to help one another and a new feeling for community grew.

When on duty in Kingston Shipyard of a night, we would talk of what we could do to improve conditions and relations, and men talked with a refreshing freedom and frankness. Gradually came the idea of having a meeting ground in the yard where men could gather and talk, where differences of trade and position could be ignored; meeting, encounter, was important. On one of his visits to the Port, I asked Sir James if we could have the use of an old building opposite the main entrance to the yard. It was now a large store, but on its flat roof there had been erected a small building which had been used as a canteen in the First World War, but was now a dumping ground for odd bits of material. Bob Maclean, the storeman and one of my elders, thought we could make something of this place. A few of us were drawn in to discuss the project. We could use the open roof for games during the lunch break and the old canteen could be adapted, with one end becoming a chapel which could be screened off, and the rest of the building being made comfortable with chairs and tables, so that men could meet in an atmosphere of relaxation. Sunday work made church attendance impossible for the men, so why not have a short Service during the lunch break in the canteen? James and Henry agreed to let us have our head. The shipyards would supply the material and make what we wanted. The idea of having a chapel in the shipyard appealed to the men, and I left them largely to draw out designs. The drawing office lent a hand. Before the building was ready for our use, I went down every day at noon when the hooter went. A gang of us would take our sandwiches and tea over the road and then squat on the roof of the store or work away at getting the canteen to our liking. Out of this a real fellowship

began to shape. The apprentices played table tennis and quoits on the roof when the weather was fine and a good time was had by all.

While this project was taking shape, I had become more reconciled to my job. Sunday congregations in Newark were thin, but I found that the lunch-hour Service in the old canteen was the act of worship which meant most to me. I had to use a different language, but felt I was making contact with the men. For me it was the most important event of the week. The shipyard had meantime become the focus of my ministry. All sorts of individual and family problems were brought to me, and I think I was gradually being trusted and accepted. We invited Dr White Anderson, who was Convener of Home Missions, to come and dedicate the chapel, and a firm date was fixed.

At one of the meetings of the Church and National Service Committee in Edinburgh, which I attended about this time, it was stated that there was a shortage of army chaplains. In secrecy we were told that the build-up for the invasion of Europe was proceeding rapidly, but that the quota of Church of Scotland chaplains had not been met. I strongly urged that we inform the Government that we were ready to see a limited call-up of younger ministers to act as chaplains with the invasion forces. There was little support for my resolution, and one young minister got up and bitterly attacked me. It was all right for me to talk but I was safe enough, my age would let me escape from such a call-up and, unless I was ready myself to go, I had no moral right to try and compel others.

It was the old dilemma. For the next few days I was restless. As always, Betty anticipated what was happening and made it easy for me. 'Ask the Session,' she said, 'and if they will let

you go then the way is open.' The Session patiently heard me out. They sensed that I had already made up my mind. Within days I had volunteered and was accepted. My medical examination was a cursory one—there was no loop-hole of escape. When my first posting came, it was a week before the opening date of the canteen and chapel at Kingston. Quickly we brought forward the date, and the day before I left for a battle school near Aldershot the first chapel in a shipyard in Scotland was dedicated. The men agreed to keep going what we had started, and events were to prove how well they kept their word.

Rise Heart

I AM grateful for my experience as an army chaplain. After battle school, which showed me how physically unfit I was, I was posted to Winston Barracks—a Primary Training Centre. This was to be my blooding. On my first Sunday I walked across the barrack square with the Commanding Officer to conduct the parade service. In spite of alterations in King's Regulations, the Colonel persisted in having a full church parade and no one dared to argue with him. Nervously I said to him, 'How long should I preach for, sir?'

He twitched his eyebrow and out came his monocle as he replied, 'Not a moment longer than you have something to say.'

I felt there was a catch but could not spot it. For the next few Sundays things went reasonably well. Then came a Sunday when I was ill-prepared. On the Saturday I had gone on a twenty-five-mile route march in pouring rain, and I had returned in the evening played out and mentally dead. I knew my matter was thin, but on I went with my sermon, hoping to make contact; the longer I went on, the more restless the men became. Suddenly I saw the Colonel's monocle fall from his eye, and at the same time he gave out a very loud cough. In a moment every man present was coughing as noisily as he

could. I had to stop speaking, it was useless trying to be heard above the row. As we crossed the parade ground after the service, I was walking a step or two behind the Colonel; he turned about on me, screwed his eyeglass into place and bawled at me, 'D'you see what I mean?'

I have often thought that if ever I were asked to give a lecture on preaching I would begin with that story: 'Preach not a minute longer than you've something to say.' Men know when we are padding out, when we're floundering out of our depth, when we are unprepared, when we have nothing of our own to say, and it does us no credit to try and bluff them. The old leisurely three-decker sermon with its liberal quotations from the classics and the poets is out, for all but the seventy-year-olds; the bright and breezy talk, well larded with apt illustrations, is out, except for the spiritually illiterate members of our congregations; the psychological chatty piece of advice is out, except for the emotional ladies in our congregations; the weekly commentary on current events backed by latest quotations from the Reader's Digest is out, as is also the pontificating biblical essay which pretends it is the avant-garde of Neo-Calvinism. There are few great preachers in the English-speaking world today. There are one or two outstanding orators, there are a number of competent lecturers, there are some able speakers, and many variously gifted talkers; but preachers—that is, men with a living word, livingly presented, born out of an existential experience which has twisted their guts and given them a pain in the middle—are in short supply. The context as well as the concept of preaching has radically changed. If it is true that preaching is twenty minutes in which to raise the dead, then the preacher himself must know what it is to die and rise again.

My war experience made me want to preach less and less;

it was an agony of soul and mind. When, eventually, I was moved from Winston Barracks to the 'sealed areas' along the English Channel coast, I was without a word for my men. Soon after D-Day I was shuttled across the Channel as a replacement to the 15th Scottish Division, and the senior chaplain, William Maxwell, took me to my battalion, which was a territorial battalion of the Royal Scots Fusiliers. We were already in a hot spot. More dazed than aware of what was going on, we moved along the narrow sunken Normandy roads under a blazing sun—dug slit-trenches and moved again. Through the dust of the roads and the dirt of the fields we advanced—mortars and shells our constant companions, mines and booby-traps our continuing fear. Casualties and burial parties became the order of each day.

For me it was a prolonged nightmare, and though I struggled not to show fear, it was always present. Eventually, in the battle of the Falaise Gap, I got a gun-shot wound in my foot. Everywhere there seemed to be chaos, and the noise was interminable. It looked a small wound and a field dressing seemed sufficient. For most of that morning and into the afternoon we pushed on and, gradually, I found that the slit shoe I had put on my injured foot was making it throb like nobody's business. The doctor saw I was in bad shape, had another look and had me dispatched to a First Aid Dressing Post. I tried to argue my way out and back to my battalion, and was curtly told if I wanted to lose my foot to go right ahead—it had turned a nasty green.

For a week I lay in the marquee hospital near Bayeux where penicillin was liberally pushed into my body. Late one night a number of us were taken on stretchers to a nearby air-strip. For hours we waited to be transported, only to find that the planes were grounded. In due course we were taken

down to the beaches by ambulance and loaded, stretcher to stretcher, in the bowels of a tank-landing craft. Then, for the better part of twenty-four hours, we lay waiting. The Germans had dropped mines off the beaches, and their planes were having pot-shots at our crafts shuttling in and out. We sweated and we stank. Ever and again some sorely wounded man would scream, and another shot into his body from one of the medical orderlies would quiet him.

I began to think of Dante's *Inferno*. I have never been a good patient, for I imagine too much, and the hurt of the men about me always aggravated my own. What a relief it was when eventually we pushed off and were safely brought ashore in England! I never knew where we tied up—it was already dark and time had become something relative. When I was allowed away from hospital, I joyfully joined Betty and the children at Colintrave, where they were on holiday for August. Everyone was very kind and each day I bathed my foot in the sea-water. The fragments of metal and boot which were still in my foot were salted out, and today only one little dark spot remains to remind me of Normandy.

When people asked me how I had felt, and what I had done, I recounted one of the few incidents I can bear to remember. Three of us were lying in a slit-trench, cowering from the mortar blasts about us. My batman, trying to ease the tension, asked, 'Padre, what will you say when you're asked what you did in the war?' Before waiting for an answer he added, 'I know what I'll say: "My son, I lay in a slit-trench and shook like a bloody leaf!"'

I was just managing to get about without a stick when a wire reached me from William Maxwell: 'You are about to receive a posting to another division. Ignore it, and return to the 15th Div. as soon as you are able.' My instructions came:

first I must report for a medical to Maryhill Barracks. This I did rather anxiously, but found a doctor whom I knew; he threw two questions at me: 'Can you walk?' and 'Are you keen to get back to your Division?' I grinned and he signed me as completely fit. I caught up with the Division in Holland and joined the 7th Seaforths on Maxwell's instructions, leaving him to explain why I had disobeyed orders. My time with the Seaforths was one of the deeply moving experiences of my life. I was with them up to the Rhine. Betty kept some of my letters written during this period, and these extracts from them tell their own story.

'December, 1944–February, 1945

Christmas Eve, and the end of a busy day. Some of the services arranged for my little chapel in the cellar had to be cancelled, for a good deal of stuff has been banging about our ears off and on all day. Those we had were very moving. We could hardly see each other's faces in the candle-light, but the simplicity and reverence were most impressive. We sang carols and I spoke for a short time. We won't manage our midnight service, the nearest we can get is a service at 9 p.m. I shall be thinking of you all sitting in Newark.

Christmas night, and I am very weary but satisfied with the day's work. I have had eight services in quite different areas—big services and small ones, and two Communion services. My last one was within 200 yards of the enemy lines. This company could not get back to my chapel, so, on the Colonel's suggestion, I went forward to them. It is a service I shall never forget: a stable

—or what was once one—men standing cramped together, tin hats on and rifles in their hands: a strange setting for carols, but how they sang them! And how glad they were to see me! We shot back along the road in full view of the other side, but not a sound except the swish of our wheels. There has been an ease-up on both sides today, a great blessing, although the noise will begin again tomorrow.

This is New Year's Day, and it's been a real strain. I managed to get around three companies. The little village where the first one was was badly smacked about. It was strangely quiet and desolate when I arrived. The men are hidden about in cellars and only come out at night. I was no sooner under cover than the stuff began to fall. The men listened with one ear cocked for the next bang.

Walking to the next company it seems as if you are the only person for miles around. The silence is terrifying. Then a voice hails you from a hidey-hole, and you know you've arrived. The effort of will to go on is a big strain, but what a welcome they give the padre! The atmosphere is tense, in the prayers they seem to pull the words out of you, so earnestly do they enter into them. There is something like a sigh of regret after the blessing has been pronounced—they don't want you to go, but I think it's the prayers and the readings they count on most, and of course the Benediction.

Thank God we've been relieved. For the first time in eight days—they feel like eight years—we can breathe a little more freely. The men have been magnificent. Medals can mean nothing at all—every man who has come through

these last ten days has won every medal worth winning. What courage I've seen! There is nothing too good that the country can do for its fighting men.'

I took seriously ill just before the Rhine crossing, and I owe my life to the surgeon who operated on me in the middle of the night in a German barracks which had become a temporary hospital. I had been feeling more dead than alive for the better part of a week, and then passed out. For some days I lay in a near coma, while telegrams went back to Betty that I was dangerously ill. Late one night the surgeon came and sat by my bed.

'Padre, I think you've had it—is there anything you would like—another padre or a priest?'

'No,' I muttered, 'I should like a glass of champagne.'

He looked at me, got to his feet. 'A great idea and I'll have one with you.'

Off he went, and ten minutes later he returned with a bottle of champagne. Where he got it I shall never know, and we drank to each other's health.

I was violently sick and remember nothing for a couple of days. Then one morning I seemed to wake up, and found the Colonel standing over me. 'You'll live, Padre, and we'll keep you here for a bit—I'm sorry it's not more comfortable, but this used to be a pantry.'

I had tubes in my arms and legs and nose and mouth, and was surrounded by the weirdest contraptions.

The surgeon, seeing either my interest or surprise, commented, 'This is my latest Heath Robinson invention.'

For a number of days I lay in a shadowy kind of existence—except for medical orderlies and the surgeon I saw nobody. It was a kind of slow coming back to life.

One evening a chaplain put his head round the door. 'Would you like me to bring Communion to you tomorrow?'

'Of course I would, and how very kind!'

Next morning the sun was shining into my little cubby-hole and I could hear the song of birds. Softly the door opened and in came a chaplain. 'I'm the R.C. chaplain. A happy Easter to you!'—and out of his battle-dress tunic he produced a couple of eggs—'Don't ask where I got them.' Out he slipped and a few minutes later in came another chaplain.

'I'm a Methodist. Happy Easter to you!' In his hand was a bunch of daffodils. 'I picked them just outside your window. When you get up you'll see the bank of them just below you.' He did not stay more than a moment—but oh, how wonderful! Easter Day!

I lay wondering how long it would be before my visitor of the night before would arrive. As the minutes passed I grew more and more anxious. Had I only been dreaming last night—and was I dreaming again? Could this be Easter? Then the knock came at the door, and here he was in cassock and surplice bearing the chalice and paten. He read the Easter Epistle and Gospel. Will I ever forget these words? I could not move my arms. He took the tube out of my mouth and gave me the Blessed Sacrament of the Lord's Body and Blood, and with the veil that covered the cup he wiped the tears which I felt coursing down my cheeks, and then he blessed me from God and quietly left.

All morning I lay quiet and wonderfully at peace, and I vowed in my heart that if I lived to return to my parish I would never waste a moment's worry on things that did not matter, and I would try and serve my Risen Lord more faithfully. And I thought long and gratefully of Betty and the children and home. I knew what it was to pass from death to

life. Years later in St Giles' on my first Easter Day there when I conducted the Service almost disastrously for all present, Herrick Bunney had chosen for the anthem George Herbert's words which saved me then and sent back my memory to that little pantry:

'Rise heart: thy Lord is risen. Sing His praise
 Without delays.
 Who takes thee by the hand, that thou likewise
 With Him may'st rise;
 That, as His death calcined thee to dust,
 His life may make thee good, and much more, just.
 Awake, my lute, and struggle for thy part
 With all thy art.
 The cross taught all wood to resound His name
 Who bore the same.
 His stretched sinews taught all strings, what key
 Is best to celebrate this most high day.
 Consort both heart and lute, and twist a song
 Pleasant and long:
 Or since all musick is but three parts vied
 And multiplied:
 O let thy blessed Spirit bear a part,
 And make up our defects with His sweet art.'

The surgeon used to call on me each day for a chat. We discussed my job and what it was that made a man a parson. He was an agnostic and hit me often pretty hard. He it was, however, who had gone round the hospitals' chaplains and told them that one of them could look me up on the Sunday. He had till then refused to allow anyone in to see me. Some days later he burst in upon me. 'Padre, where is it recorded in

Scripture "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"?"

I gave him as nearly as I could the chapter and verse in St Luke's Gospel and then asked him, 'What's come over you, have I begun to persuade you?'

'Indeed you have not,' and he brandished a file of papers at me. 'This all concerns you. You should have been sent back to a base hospital days ago, but I kept you here until I was sure you were mending. Once you are out of my hands who's going to pride himself on my handiwork? You'll find out in due course. Every day a sheaf of papers, questionnaires and what have you, have come and I've let them pile up on my table. Now I've received orders to complete the whole batch. So I'm clipping them all together under a slip of paper with just "See Luke 23", or wherever it is, and leaving them to it. However, we'll need to get rid of you now. I'll miss you.' He did not trouble to say good-bye.

The next day I was flown to Brussels, where I spent two days in a slap-up hospital too crowded for anyone to care about anybody. It was with much relief that I found myself, stretcher and all, securely strapped down in a transport plane and flown to a hospital in England. Mine had been an inglorious war: fleeing on the deck of a destroyer at the Fall of France, floated out from the beaches of Normandy in a kind of hospital hell-ship, and now flown at no great speed nearer and nearer home.

My troubles were not yet over. I had hoped that I might end up in a hospital in Scotland. After a week in a huttet hospital in the Midlands I suggested that I might be moved nearer home. The sister was not very hopeful and then she suggested brightly, 'Why not apply for some leave?' This I promptly did, and Sister started me on the necessary drill. I

would have to be able to walk out of hospital without assistance if I was to obtain leave. So each day I clambered out of bed, tried a few faltering steps and fell back exhausted into bed again. At last I was able to walk the whole length of the ward without assistance, and I was given my railway vouchers and leave.

I had wired to Betty to try and get some kind of ambulance to meet me at the Central Station, as I was not all that mobile. Fortunately, I had found a young Scots soldier who had lost an arm and whose home was near Dumfries: he also was going on leave. We got a taxi—we made an ill-assorted pair—and we manœuvred ourselves into a crowded train for the north. Betty rescued me at the Central and, bless her, she had raised from Mrs Johnstone at the undertakers the most ancient ambulance that ever was—I think it must have been used as a hearse. To me it was the most beautiful thing ever evolved by the technical skill of man. I was edged on the stretcher, which looked like a catafalque, and with what inexpressible joy with Betty beside me was driven at the majestic speed of twenty-five miles an hour to the Port. I was nearly free, and I was all in one piece.

It was coming home in more senses than one. I had been lost. My preoccupation with death had brought me very near to it. The putting together of the bodies of the men I had known, the anguish of digging graves and cutting out crosses and then writing to wives and mothers, had brought me close to desolation. I sometimes wonder if we ministers know what we are doing when we read the burial service. My letters home are desolating and angry.

Dr Connell soon had me in hand. He immediately wired off that I was unfit to return after leave and so began the long journey to recovered health and confidence. I appeared before

various medical boards and Alan Davidson's letter to me seemed to clinch matters. I was finally discharged with the considered advice that if I found an easier parish there was no reason why I should not live for a bit.

Peter Hunt, my C.O., had written to the senior chaplain after my collapse:

'Harry Whitley's illness was a tragedy for the battalion, and a personal loss as far as I was concerned. He was quite magnificent, and did more for the Battalion than a whole host of officers. We shan't forget him in a hurry. I wrote him soon after he went into hospital, and have just had an answer—he seems to be getting along slowly but surely. We have not yet had anyone posted in his place, but it would be an anticlimax anyway.'

Perhaps after all I had not been such a failure as a chaplain.

Outside the Walls

NEWARK had helped pray me back to recovery, now they stood by me, as I struggled to find a word to preach. I think most of my sermons were about the horror and sin of war, and a lot about death. These Sundays must have been depressing for a congregation but they gave no sign of impatience and the quiet and beauty of Newark helped take away the hurt to my soul. Betty and Dr Connell did the rest. My Session Meetings were concerned with getting back to a normal congregational life and making up for the wasted years of war. The senior members had lost something of their resilience, but they continued to keep me on an even keel. Archie Leitch would interrupt when some decision was hanging fire. 'Will it make you happy, minister?' and when I smiled and said yes—then he would turn to the other elders, 'Well, what are we waiting for?' and without division a decision would be made. Only once in my entire ministry in Newark was a decision made which was not completely unanimous and there lies a tale.

In the days towards the end of the conflict in Western Europe morale among the troops had started to fall. The end was in sight, and we began to think about preserving our lives. Instructions had come from one source that officers, and par-

ticularly padres, should start discussions with the men about the kind of country we wanted to see and make when we got back home. Most of us were rather cynical. If there was to be a country fit for heroes to live in then it would not happen simply because hostilities had ceased—we would have to build our own brave new world and it would take some building. Once after such a discussion, when most of us were ‘browned off’, it was suggested that we all ought to have a bash at getting into politics, local and national, and for fun we resolved that the men who were first out of the army should stand in the next local elections. The ones who survived owed it to the others to do something more than talk.

When I got back home the feeling in the town was bad. It had known none of the heroics of war, only its waste—and its profiteering. The whole place was wearied out with overwork, seven days a week; and cynical. I felt more strongly than ever that I ought to get into things, to fight for decent housing and a way out of apathy. But I was still not fit for a week’s work, and often it was two days on my feet and three on my back. The congregation had struggled, nobly, to hold together in my absence. In many ways they had a right to expect my whole time and strength, such as it was, now I was back, to build up Newark again.

On the other hand, I had never believed that any church existed to minister to itself and its own members but only to those outside. And, like many, I had grown increasingly critical of the power and influence of the political parties in purely local affairs. Why not stand without a party label, just as the parish minister? I knew it would be foolishness to do this without the support of the Session, so I put it to them. With one exception they were agreeable to have me stand, provided I did not link up with any of the political parties, and

provided that I made quite clear that I was doing this as the parish minister. I was puzzled and worried; I had never acted before without the unanimous backing of the elders. Dare I break this rule now? I was convinced that I ought to give it a try, and in any case I might not be elected. So for the first and only time a decision was put to the vote. It was agreed that I offer myself as a candidate.

I probably needed this tonic of renewed effort. A minister who is so often master of his own time can get into a rut quicker than he is usually prepared to admit. He needs something to rattle and to rouse him, especially when he is making heavy weather of his duties. To be stretched is to find direction again. At first I was rather terrified at the prospect of addressing public meetings and being heckled. My knowledge of local government was pretty sketchy.

However, once launched it became great fun. I spoke outside the shipyard gates amidst much good humour. One dinner hour my opponent and myself took turn and turn about on the soap-box. He was an excellent person, and a most honourable and fair opposition. I always regretted that he never made his mark in politics. I was, of course, roundly attacked by both sides and told to mind my own business. One day I was cautiously approached by a member of the right-wing party and asked if I could be doing with £100—it was mine if I would just quietly withdraw from the field—anyway, party politics was not a clean game and it would not be good for the cloth to be mixed up in it. He was a slippery devil and I would happily have wrung his neck.

It was whispered to me that I ought to visit the Model Lodging House—the inmates were a tough collection but there were 200/300 votes to be collected by someone who could get on their wave-length. Certainly the night I called

found the place grim and cold and dimly lit. Some of the casuals were still cooking their evening meals on the hot-plate amid the smoky atmosphere. The purpose was to get up on a table and speak at the top of your voice, hoping that the men would interrupt whatever they were at and give you a hearing. Eventually a measure of quiet was achieved, and I delivered my party piece with occasional interruptions and curses. I felt I was putting up a pretty sorry show. I called for any questions and none was immediately forthcoming.

Then, out of the dark shadows of one corner, a voice broke in. It was precise, clipped and querulous, but obviously belonging to a man of some education. He began: 'I take it from our friend's accent that he is a product of my Alma Mater, Edinburgh. It is also quite clear that he knows nothing about local government, but I think his intentions are honest. Would he tell us, if he is elected, what, if anything, he is prepared to do for the collection of old curiers who inhabit this palatial hotel?'

His sally was greeted partly by laughter and partly by mutters. The manager, who was beside me, whispered that the speaker was a bit of a crack-pot and not to bother answering him. My instinct was, however, to reply courteously and make contact with this shadowy figure in the background. I replied that I was happy to meet a fellow citizen of my native city and I would be delighted to welcome any sinners to my church, and that the point he raised seemed to have more to do with theology than with local government.

I would, however, be delighted to talk with him further at the end of the meeting. This was most warmly received and, there being no further questions, I hopped down from the table and made over towards the direction of the voice. He was a little bent figure of a man—his jacket was well cut, though dirty and threadbare, he wore an old-fashioned stiff

white collar—or near white—and a tie of faded splendour in which was stuck jauntily a pearl tie-pin. From the waist down he was dressed like any tramp—moleskins and hob-nailed boots. We bowed to each other and he asked if I would like to share his evening meal which he was just about to cook. I hesitated, but said I would very much like to see how he cooked it and would enjoy talking to him as this proceeded.

I was led over to the hot-plate, round which had gathered again a group of men, dirty, unkempt, unwashed, unshaved. With consummate ease he introduced me to them all one by one and by name—and they all obviously had some respect for him. He then proceeded to fry his two sausages and boil his can of tea, continuing the while to address me as if I were a public meeting. He had a wonderful command of language and was enjoying himself enormously. Eventually, I had to tell him that I was needed to speak at another meeting and must go. With old-world courtesy he offered to see me to the door of this dismal hiding place for down-and-outs. He turned to lead the way, shouting over his shoulder, ‘Patrick, see that none of these gentlemen swipes my supper.’ At the door he shook my hand and with a wicked glint in his eye he muttered: ‘Leave it to me, I will see that the gentlemen here give you their votes. It is high time an Edinburgh man was on the Town Council even though he is a parson. Good night to you, sir!’

The following Sunday I had just announced my text from the pulpit when a clatter came at the door of the church. I never have been able to understand why we lock the doors of our churches as soon as the Service begins. I discovered the other day that we’ve been doing the same in St Giles’. An elder went to the door and the sound of voices from the vestibule echoed upon us—then a door burst open and my friend

of the lodging-house strolled down one of the aisles followed by a red-faced elder.

The little man made straight to the front pew, edged his way into a seat and took out a sheaf of papers from his pocket which he laid on the book board with a resounding smack. I was conscious of all this happening as I launched out into my sermon. Ever and again I would hear a mutter below me, whether of approval or disagreement I could not make out. The sermon ended, I gave out the concluding hymn. Immediately an irate figure pushed his way out of the front pew and clattered his way to the main door. His entry and exit had created considerable astonishment among the congregation.

On the Monday I received a postcard. The writing was difficult to decipher, but its spidery flourishes lent it a mark of distinction. He was questioning my exegesis of the text. He had looked up the Greek and, as far as he could fathom it, the text should have run this way, and he quoted the Greek with his own translation. His concluding sentence was in French.

For the next few Sundays the same thing happened. Just as the sermon was about to begin a clatter came at the door, and as soon as the sermon was ended up he got and noisily left us. It was a severe strain on the congregation, especially the running commentary that went on below the pulpit. Some of my elders came to me, and suggested that I might speak to him and remind him that he was causing a disturbance. So it was arranged that an elder should waylay him as he entered, and ask him to wait as I wanted to speak to him.

The next Sunday we followed this plan. He sat on in a disgruntled way during the final hymn, reluctantly got to his feet for the Blessing, collected his papers and made for the door. Meanwhile, I had dashed round from the vestry to catch him, but was just a moment or two late. An elder had drawn

him into conversation, for, as I came round the corner of the building, the little man in his reedy voice was shouting as the elder backed away from him: 'Come in time, indeed! If you lived in the kind of hotel in which it is my lot to dwell you would count it a work of grace that I come to church at all.' We calmed him down and assured him that he was welcome to come any time he liked. The elders and congregation were to play up most wonderfully. For six months he was to blow in and out of a Sunday and no one batted an eyelid. Only once was there real consternation. The Moderator of the General Assembly had come to preach and something he said irritated our friend. He collected his papers noisily, rose deliberately to his feet, bowed towards the pulpit and slowly footed it out of the church. On the Monday a postcard from him read: 'If you must absent yourself from your pulpit you might see that whoever fills it preaches orthodoxy.'

The day of election had come—would I be elected? I don't know what the betting was in the town, but as I waited towards midnight for the results it grew very exciting. I must confess that when it was announced that I was the successful candidate I found it a great thrill. There were cheers outside the Town Hall as the verdict of the voters was put up on the notice-boards. We were only sorry my opponent could not be elected as well, for he would have been an excellent choice for his party.

A few days later we had a visit from our friend in the lodging-house. It was the first time that he had called at the manse. We saw that his arm was in a sling. Apparently he had fallen and broken it. He had a twofold purpose in calling. He could not write with a broken arm, would my wife be so good as to take some dictation from him? Also he wanted to inform me *sub rosa* that the lodging-house had voted to a man for me.

The two parties had offered cars to transport the men to the polling booths if they would register their votes in the right way. They had taken generous advantage of these offers, promising their votes with smug seriousness. On arrival, they had voted for Whitley. I left him with my wife.

His letter was to his sisters, two eminent old Edinburgh ladies of enormous respectability. My wife censored it as much as she dared in taking it down. It began: 'My Revered Sisters, I have, I suppose, to thank you for that heterodox conglomeration of ill-assorted groceries which, in spite of its incompetent parcelling, somehow reached me last Thursday. . . .'

They had once offered him a home, but the arrangement had proved unhappy for both parties. He preferred his freedom. His one luxury, an expensive pipe tobacco, he paid for by peddling the *Poems of Robert Burns* from door to door. Here, too, his approach was original. He would begin: 'I don't suppose you want to buy a book. You probably don't read books. Very few people in this town do. I don't think they can read at all.' Mortified women, conscious of their deficiencies, would buy several copies.

The first meeting of the new Town Council did not last very long. The majority party had most of the business pre-arranged, and some working agreement had been come to with the other side. The baillies were elected, or re-elected, and the convenerships filled, except some relatively unimportant ones. At the appropriate moment the Provost made a left-handed speech of welcome to me and then proposed that I be appointed convener of cemeteries, pointing out that the youngest councillor was invariably given this post. I protested that I felt I might be of more use to the community dealing with the living rather than the dead.

Some discussion followed, then, amid some laughter, the

reason for which I could not fathom, I was elected Convener of Steamies (wash-houses) and Baths. As the days passed I discovered that I had been landed with the white elephant of all convenerships—the steamies were primitive beyond belief and the swimming baths had long before been condemned as dangerous and insanitary. Whenever there was an epidemic of any nature among the children the first action had always been to close down the swimming pool. It seemed, therefore, that I had something on my plate after all.

Some days after the visit to the manse by our ‘professor’ from the lodging-house, a telephone call from the manager informed me that the old man was down with pleurisy and would I call on him. I did this almost immediately and was shown up to his cubicle. It was a narrow box of a place, with a bunk and barely room to stand beside it. Something like forty men shared this dormitory of cubicles, each with its six-foot partition of plywood.

The old man obviously was quite ill, but chirpy as usual. He apologized from his bunk that he had no chair to offer me. It was difficult to hear him speak, because the cubicle next door seemed to be occupied by a drunken Irishman. He was singing at the top of his voice one moment and cursing in the bluest of language the next. My friend saw I was getting worried for he lifted up his voice and called out, ‘Patrick, do be a good fellow and keep quiet, I have my spiritual adviser with me.’ Strangely, immediately there was silence, and our conversation thereafter continued without any background noises. He wanted me to draw his old-age pension and pay some bills. This I agreed to do, and promised to call again, and meantime made up my mind to have a doctor examine him. I purposely lost my way going out and had a good look over the building. It was in an appalling state—ill-lit, damp, with an all-per-

vading smell of decay and old men. I made a mental note that something ought to be done about the place. It was a disgrace to the community.

Christmas was coming near and I was due a visit to Father Keane. I did not know how he had reacted to my entry into local politics. He had become a warm admirer of Betty and had kept in touch with the manse while I had been in the army. I have kept two letters of his which I greatly treasure. One I think is unique—a commendation¹ written in Latin as well as in English and I carried it with me throughout the campaign in Western Europe. The other came to me while I was in hospital in England—it still moves me almost to tears.

‘My dear Harry,

I do sincerely hope that by the time you receive this note you will be well on the way to recovery—and home. You have all my prayers and I’ll get the prayers of much better people, i.e. of some of our religious houses. I was on the phone with Betty. As usual she is bearing up well but I could feel a deep current of solicitude and anxiety in her voice. We will all be anxiously awaiting further news. One cause for confidence—and it is a big one—is your buoyancy. Keep up your heart. Nothing new in the Port. Work is not so plentiful as it has been and all are praying for the end of the war.

I’ll be looking forward to seeing you soon again. Meantime God bless and keep you.

Ever sincerely yours,

Simon Keane

P.S. I have just heard from Betty that she has had good news—thank God. She was much brighter than when

¹ See Appendix.

she spoke last—and is hopeful of getting you home soon and finishing the cure.

S.'

I was rather worried lest Simon disapproved of my action in becoming involved in civic affairs, and during the campaign I had kept away from him deliberately. Now it was all over I wanted to hear what he had made of it all. I looked in at the Presbytery House and found him in bed with a bad cough, but he was bright and full of fun as usual. 'You didn't bring the lady with you—you would be lost without her, Harry. Do you remember when you brought her here to meet me? Damn it, I was in bed at the time and you got me up. I told you I had angina but you just said nonsense, this will cure your angina. There was nothing to drink in the place and I had to send one of the boys [curates] to fetch a bottle of communion wine. Yes, we drank her health in communion wine! What would your strait-laced Presbyterians say about that?' I could see he was in good form although in some pain. 'Well, you're a town councillor. I can't make up my mind whether you were right or wrong to do this, but I told my people to vote for you. Better the devil you know than the one you don't.'

I wanted to know about his Christmas crib. For years he had set it up and prepared it himself. It was his great act of devotion to our Lady. He had collected life-size figures from all over the world: the sheep and oxen, the donkey and the angels, and a typical Italian bambino for the Christ Child. Every year he set it up with his own hands, and I knew something of himself went to its creating. I asked him if he would be well enough to prepare the Christmas crib, for I was willing to come and lend him a hand. 'Of course I'll be able. But, look you, when it is ready I'll give you a ring and you must bring

down the children. I don't think they've seen my masterpiece.' So I left him in fine fettle.

A few days later he rang. 'Come on down and bring the children.' His voice sounded excited. 'Something wonderful has happened; come on now, hurry up, I'll be waiting for you outside the chapel.' We hurried down the hill and there he was waiting for us. His face was flushed and he obviously was agitated. He took me aside. 'A wonderful thing has happened. It's a miracle!' and he went on to describe how he had come into the chapel to turn on the lights and to see that all was in order before telephoning me. 'But, as I came through the door beside the Sanctuary, I thought I heard a child crying. And I stopped, and by God I did hear a child crying, and the sound came from the direction of the crib. I tiptoed over, and as I came near, sure enough, a child was crying, and I could see a dirty little fist beating against the manger. I thought, my God, it is a miracle, and so it was! In the crib was a dirty little child crying his heart out. I lifted him up, wondering what it all meant, and then out of the corner of my eye I saw in the shadows below the Christmas window a girl holding the bambino. Beside her was an empty pram. She came towards me, half-afraid and crying, and said: "Father, I wanted to hold the baby Jesus in my arms and I thought you wouldn't mind. You see, I put my wee brother in the manger just to make it right."'

The tears were streaming down Father Keane's cheeks as he told me his experience. For him it had been a great moment—for him it was a miracle. Then he turned to me. 'If only we would remember that Christ is in every child, what a difference it would make to how we all behave!' Then in a flash he was himself again. My children were what mattered and full of whimsy and inspiration he told them the story of the Incarnation.

Fun and Games

I QUICKLY discovered that the only way I could make an impact on the proceedings of the Town Council was to take advantage of the monthly public meeting. Most things were decided in committee, with the result that the public meeting usually lasted a few minutes and few of the public ever bothered to attend. If I could raise an issue at each public meeting of the Town Council I would very soon make the town aware of all matters which were important and enlist their sympathy on questions which seemed to me relevant and important. My technique was unoriginal but effective. I would begin by asking what seemed an innocent question concerning one of the minutes. Your convener would usually rise to it and give a considered reply. Then I would ask a supplementary question, which usually put the cat among the pigeons, and in a moment we were involved in an argument.

It did not take the Press long to spot what I was at. To ask a question was to pin-point a matter of importance, and it was then up to the reporters to ferret out what was behind an apparently normal and innocent question. In this way it gradually put all conveners on their toes, as no one knew whose turn it was going to be next. Usually I carefully chose my ground, and soon it was quite clear that one individual could

cut across the party line and compel an open discussion. Our public meetings began to lengthen in time and people began to move into the public gallery. Something was bound to happen now, and the fun of listening in to an acrimonious discussion made a visit to the Town Buildings quite worth while. I knew I could not play this game for long. Sooner or later both sides would turn up to muzzle me, but so long as I could play this line I kept at it.

My great moment came when the majority decided to put me on the question stand. Without any warning I was asked if I had done anything about the condition of certain of the tubs in the wash-houses. Complaints had been made that some of them were in poor condition. It was right up my street. I declared that I was ashamed to have my name linked with this building, and that I believed the time had come to replan it entirely and, moreover, to take steps to have a proper swimming pool. I was prepared to move that the Town Council instruct me to prepare plans for new wash-houses and swimming baths. This was more than had been bargained for, and the Provost cleverly intervened to rule that such a motion was out of order. The Press, however, had taken the point and the next morning gave it a good airing.

I was off on another ploy before I knew it. The steamies had to be dealt with and perhaps, after all, cleanliness was next to godliness. I sought an interview with Sir James Lithgow, which he readily granted. When I explained what I was after, he indicated that he was prepared to lend a hand. First I must find out what the whole project would cost to modernize the steamies and build a new swimming pool, and also persuade the Town Council to back the scheme and set to to obtain an Exchequer grant towards this special expenditure. Quickly I got an estimate and told Sir James of the total cost. He would

meet a substantial share of the total expenditure, but on one condition, that the entire project was carried through within six months. 'I understand,' he said, 'that you and the Housing Convener don't always see eye to eye over the speed of building operations—now you can fight it out between you.' I had the week before hit the Housing Convener for a six over the slowness in slum clearance and housing building. There were some hard feelings on both sides as a result.

I indicated to the Provost that I intended to make a statement at the next meeting of the Council on the steamies, and that I hoped to have some interesting news. Once he was in the picture he was as always ready to play ball. I think, too, that he relished the possibility of a competition and the fun of seeing me really stretched. The Provost was able, astute and as quick as a bag of monkeys. He was an excellent chairman and a cunning politician. A riveter by trade, he was a typical and fine example of the black squad. Leaving school at fourteen, he had only the resilience of his own hardy character, a thirst for knowledge, and a natural ability to speak in public, to help him make his mark. He genuinely believed in socialism as the only way to create the Kingdom of God on earth. He had been brought up as a Roman Catholic, but, like many another, he had thrown over the practice of religion for the more realist practice of politics. This little square man, with his 'hooker doon', was for the better part of a generation the most significant political figure in the town. I liked him and I enjoyed him, even though we said hard things about each other. It is a pity that he has not found himself a seat in the House of Commons. As each young Whitley was born in the parish he would greet me with one comment, 'I see you've been good to your wife again!' We grew to be very fond of him and, as I look back, I believe I am proud to have served under him as a town councillor.

I made my promised statement on the steamies and announced Sir James's generous offer and condition. It was received by the Town Council with sober satisfaction, and agreed that the reconstruction be put in hand. There was a suspicion in my own mind that both parties rather hoped that I would be caught out over the time factor. The Provost, however, was enthusiastic and I knew that I could rely on his backing.

It was soon apparent that it would indeed be a race against time, and for the town it became a main topic of conversation. One pub, I understand, ran a sweepstake on it. The Press kept a watchful eye on progress and each morning I was down on the job urging and exhorting speed. The Provost also had caught the mood and his casual visits became more regular than casual.

The week before the six months were up things looked black—there had been delay in the delivering of some essential parts, but by now even the workers were determined that no effort would be spared. Overtime was accepted without complaint and an almighty rush begun. I knew that I would have to ask Sir James to inspect the work, but I put off until the last possible moment. With one day in hand, I telephoned to find out if it would be convenient for him to look the job over. We fixed a time, and bang on the hour he bustled in. I had made a last-minute inspection and it seemed to me that everything was in order and that we had just made it.

But I knew perfectly well that Sir James could spot an omission, or a piece of faulty work, with uncanny ease. He took his jacket off and left me to make his own tour of inspection while I kept my fingers crossed. All at once he hollered at me from across the swimming pool: 'Whitley! Come and see this.' I hastened round to the corner where we had built W.C.s

and wash-basins, somehow aware that we had omitted or botched something. And there he was pointing scornfully but triumphantly at a W.C. 'Look, man, there's not a lid on the lot. You've lost the deal!' Then he laughed as only he could. 'Not bad. Everything seems to be shipshape except *that*. So, we'll call it a day.' The Provost had been warned of the inspection and now joined us. Sir James greeted him familiarly and congratulated him, but told him how near we were to losing out.

I was to be occupied with many things concerning the life of the town during my term of office as a councillor—houses, playing fields, prisons, handicapped children, hospitals. It was a most valuable insight into how local government works or should work and if often I was angry with frustration I never let up in my persistence and question-asking. One result which haunts me always was that people came with their many problems to me as a councillor which they had never done to me as a parish minister, at least in anything like the same degree. Yet there was the time when the parish minister was the confidant, the father confessor, the adviser and counsellor for the whole parish. To have a taste of this was to remind me forcibly of the gulf that had arisen between the parish minister and his parish. Not until I came to St Giles', and was expected to know everybody in the city, did I recapture this sense of belonging to more than a congregation.

Soon after the completion of the baths and wash-houses it was decided to hold a civic supper in the Star Hotel for the Town Council and wives, officials and influential citizens. It was a good idea and should have been a happy occasion. Unfortunately, there had been some bitter feelings and words over a recent election, and party politics became the key-note of the speeches made after the supper. There was a fairly long

list of speakers—really with the intention of letting every side have its say. It soon became evident, however, that the minister of Newark was receiving more than his fair share of oblique references. In fact, the snipes coming my way from both of the main parties were just a little unnecessary. With a twinkle to Betty I sat back to await my turn. When the Provost called on me to speak I began: ‘There were once two rabbits being chased for their lives by a pack of foxes. In desperation they had managed to clamber up on to a high wall. Below them the foxes jumped and snapped and tried to get at their prey. At last Mr Rabbit turned to Mrs Rabbit as he glanced down at the threatening pack, and said, “My dear, I’m afraid there is nothing for it but to stay here until we outnumber them!”’ With that I sat down, and differences dissolved in laughter. There were four young Whitleys by this time, Michael having joined us.

Apart from my town council duties and the claims of my congregation, I had two major propositions on my hands. The forming of a club or meeting place for the shipyard workers, and the keeping going of the Port Glasgow Boys’ Club. Sir James had bought for us some years earlier the Old Custom House on the Old Harbour for use as a boys’ club. It had had its ups and downs, but had managed to struggle on throughout the war. I remember well going to Gleddoch with estimates for the reconstruction of the building, which he himself had inspected very carefully, climbing up on to the roof to check its condition. Before dinner he asked me to read out the various items of expected expenditure. I knew they added up to a considerable sum, and wondered how far he was prepared to go. However, nothing was said and we went in to dinner—as always he and Lady Lithgow were perfect hosts and we discussed happily the town gossip. We broached many

subjects but no reference was made to the boys' club. Before we were due to leave, Sir James asked again what were the main items of expenditure. I trotted out as nearly as I could the main figures. In each case I gave what I thought was the rough figure and in each case he was able to correct me and give to a pound the exact figure. He had an astonishing grasp of figures and had me every time. Details mattered to him, and I could understand how the men who really knew him understood that it would take some diddling to diddle him. This was so often the ground of their admiration of him. Without more ado he said, 'Go ahead, get on with the work and let me know if you want any more help.'

But the shipyards were continuously on my conscience. The war-time arrangement was adequate for the then difficult circumstances, but some of us felt that the time had come to go in for something really big. It was at this period that I wrote to Sir James, feeling that I was risking his friendship. The Burns Supper which is mentioned in the letter was our first attempt at a really large gathering and meant to demonstrate that it was possible to assemble many of the men for a social occasion. We also wanted to prove that there was a committee capable of taking responsibility.

'Dear Sir James,

I feel it is high time I was putting on paper thoughts that have again and again been shooting through my mind in recent months and appear to have come to a head in recent events in the Yards. I know you would not want me to pull my punches, so I state as frankly as may be what I feel.

The present wave of deep depression that hangs over my committee in the Yard due to their unconcealed disappoint-

ment over the hanging fire of the Burns Supper needs to be explained a little and that means going back a little. On the 19th December a meeting was held at which Mr Morton was present. The attached minute taken by Smith, the Club Secretary, explains what more or less took place. There was a general feeling after that meeting that we were getting places. The management seemed sympathetic and willing to help. On the next day a letter was sent to Mr White by the Club Secretary seeking an interview. As no reply was received on the few days following Mr Morton was approached and he told Smith and Kennedy to go to the office and ask for Mr White. This they did and report that they were most courteously received and the interview greatly encouraged them from every angle. They pointed out that it was their intention to run a Burns Supper and please could they have the use of the canteen. It was important to know whether that would be possible within the next two or three days as they would have to get tickets printed, speakers arranged etc. etc. Mr White said that he would let them know that afternoon or the following day at the latest. To their great disappointment nothing more was heard.

Today a Committee Meeting was held during the lunch hour when the above story was told. The general reaction was that they were being stalled—apparently a useful method employed by management to scupper something. It was a most unhappy meeting this and frankly I don't blame the men for being disheartened. They are a first-class crowd of men as Mr Morton would himself be bound to admit and I can't help being influenced by their mood.

What begins to happen again is that the Lithgows get blamed—at first this seems odd reasoning but in point of

fact it is inevitable, wrong and all that it is. They get courtesy and promises from the management and then nothing happens, and of course they imagine that someone else must have stepped in and burst the ball—the only person who could interfere is the head of the firm and so the old story goes the rounds again. I argued with one man today on the absurdity of his assumption but his reply was, “It is Sir James’s firm and he must know what goes on in it.” Herein, as far as I can gather, lies the germ of all the silly and unfounded blame which through the years falls on your undeserving head.

My main concern is to find again a basis of trust and goodwill. The men trust nobody and sometimes I think they have grounds for this. There is neither trust between man and man, whether he be mate, foreman, manager or head of the house, and until a measure of honest trust is born I cannot see anything else but continued warfare and bad feeling when troubles arise as arise they must. I had hopes that along the lines of our experiment at Kingston this trust would be found, as indeed in these past few months it has been, but we’ve lost it again. And the sad bit is that it has been caused by the old story of a stalling, hesitant management, at least that is the reaction of the men.

I want to emphasize that there are a whole lot of fine blokes in the Yards, and we were on the road to catching some of them. The trouble-makers are a minority and the worst types, but for lack of good leadership the others fall into step often against their own better judgment. I believe we were on the right road but now I feel we are being side-tracked, and that is why I am writing at such length to you. The whole thing we are after wants airing and a lot of questions straightened out, and I am of the opinion that

now is the time to do it. The minute which I have enclosed is a good enough working basis for a start.

My lazy side would feel inclined to fall out at this stage, but were that my reaction I would be disloyal to you and to the men. Consequently I am trying to raise what to us all is an important issue by writing to you.

Yours ever sincerely,

H. C. Whitley'

I also enclosed a copy of a minute which, reading it now, seems to have marked the turning point in the relations between management and workers in the shipyards and to lay the foundation of what later was to become known as the 'Lithgow Club'.

'Kingston Welfare Club.'

A Committee Meeting of the Club was held in the Canteen on 19th December, 1945, the following members being present: Rev. H. C. Whitley, Messrs McLean, Smith, Downie, Dean, Balloch, Chapman, Connell, Cormack, Kennedy, Notman, McMillan, Johnstone. Mr J. F. Morton, Yard Manager, attended the Meeting. Rev. H. C. Whitley introduced Mr Morton who said that his firm and himself were very interested in the work of the Club, and told the Committee that he was present to answer any questions, and to state his views on the proposed schemes of the Club.

Mr Connell asked if the floor of the Club room could be seen to, as its present condition was very bad, and meant that the room was continually covered in dust. Mr Morton said that he thought that could be improved. Mr Cormack asked about other accommodation, as the present accommodation was quite inadequate for the purposes the Club

had in mind. Mr Morton said that at present a Government Permit was required before any building could be erected, and it was his opinion that such a permit would not be granted for a number of years so far as this Club was concerned. He offered the Club the use of the Canteen downstairs, provided they put on working parties each night to clear the building and to reset it at the end of their gatherings. It was then asked about light switches which were all operated from the Canteen Kitchen. Mr Morton said that he could arrange for lights. Mr Smith asked if facilities for returning hospitality could be arranged on nights when they were entertaining visiting teams. He suggested the installation of a gas ring. Mr Morton thought that that difficulty could be overcome.

Mr Notman outlined the ultimate aims and objects of the Club (see attached Appendix). Mr Morton said it would be better to start on a small scale and gradually build up, feeling it would be better to go slow at first rather than have a mushroom growth and then disappear. He assured the Committee that the Firm was keenly interested and if, after a probationary period of say six to twelve months, there was still sufficient interest shown, the Firm would then have something concrete to work on.

Mr Connell spoke about having a bar and a dance hall, and Mr Morton said he was altogether opposed to a bar in a welfare club and the same applied to a dance hall.

Mr Whitley asked if the Firm would be prepared at this stage to recognize the Club and Mr Morton replied that he thought they would. It was then asked if the Club could have the use of the chairs which were stored downstairs, having come from the Eclipse Canteen. Mr Morton said he did not see any reason why they could not.

Mr Morton at this point questioned the name of the Club, and expressed the opinion that a better title would be the Lithgow Institute. This was cordially welcomed by the Committee.

Mr Kennedy asked if facilities for a Burns Night could be arranged. Mr Morton said that if the Club went the right way about it, that was to see Mr White or Mr Graham or himself, he had no doubt that it could be arranged. The Meeting then closed with a vote of thanks to Mr Morton for attending the Meeting.'

Alex White, who had been with Sir James during the war at Admiralty House, had been appointed Secretary to Kingston Yard, and proved himself to be a great acquisition not only to the shipbuilding industry but also to Port Glasgow. From the moment of our meeting we became close friends, and he very quickly won the respect and trust of the shipyard employees. He boldly came down on our side, and was to give himself whole-heartedly to fostering good relations among all in the yards. Many hours of his time were given over to meeting us, and helping persuade Sir James and Henry Lithgow to consider our requests. A Burns Supper did take place and both James and Henry agreed to come. It was to be the first time that owners, management and representatives of all the trades and crafts were to sit down together and find the company agreeable. James made an excellent speech, and Henry also was prevailed on to make one of the few public speeches he ever made. Both brothers were loudly cheered and I felt that history was being made. There had been a break-through.

Bit by bit, plans developed. At first we thought of reconstructing the old canteen, and then one day Alex White sent for me—there was a project which he thought might interest

me. Greatly wondering I went down to Kingston office where I had become a regular visitor. Alex had the exciting news that the lodging-house in Boundary Street was for sale. Should we buy, and make it into the finest clubrooms of any shipyard on the Clyde? He knew James and Henry were interested. So was born the greatest single social experiment in the shipbuilding community of Port Glasgow in this century. Today it stands as a striking memorial to the brothers James and Henry, to the common sense of the workers, the perseverance of a few men and the drive and inspiration of Alex White.

One of the proudest of all my possessions is an illuminated address which hangs in my study and reads:

‘Address to the Reverend H. C. Whitley, M.A., from the Committee and Members of the Lithgow Club, Port Glasgow.

30th March, 1950

We wish to place on record our appreciation of the great services rendered by you to our Club firstly as the Founder of the Club in the year 1941: secondly as Honorary Vice-President from 1946.

Your untiring devotion to the development of the Club has been a source of inspiration to us, and the result is best indicated by the membership, which, at the beginning, consisted of about 20 persons and is now over 1,500 persons.

Your departure from Port Glasgow is regretted by all of us, but we wish you every success in your new sphere of endeavour.’

It seemed a far cry from the days when we had met on the roof of the old canteen to the magnificent building which was

officially opened just a few months before I was due to leave Port Glasgow for my second parish.

I had promised my Kirk Session, after I had agreed to be sole nominee for a cathedral church in a small country town in the north, that I would not leave them unless I felt sure I was called to a harder job. I knew my friends in the north were angry with me for suddenly withdrawing my name but the reason was no complicated one—just that I would be going to a 'better 'ole' and would be leaving a lot of work incomplete in the Port.

Now I received a call to Partick Parish Church in Glasgow, up the river and on the other side of the river. It was a terrible wrench to leave Newark. For fifteen years I had been parish minister there, my five children had been born there. Edward had been the first child to be born in the manse for fifty years. There had never been a dull moment. I had made many mistakes, but made many friends. Betty and I had been through a lot together and somehow we sensed that we were saying good-bye to the happiest days of my ministry. We had sometimes been tempted to seek pastures new, and on a few occasions deputations had tried to tempt us away, but we had believed that we had a job to do and that there was no running away until it was complete.

In my farewell sermon to Newark I said:

'For fifteen years we have travelled together on a road which a few weeks ago seemed to run unbroken into the future, but now we have come to a parting of the ways. I have always dreaded the thought that one day I might have to bid you farewell. You have given me so much and been so patient with me through these long and exciting and often difficult years. When I came to Newark in 1935,

uppermost in my mind was the conviction that I had received a call which I could not refuse. Always in my study has remained that bound folio which you signed then, promising me "all dutiful respect, encouragement and obedience in the Lord". Many of those whose names appeared on that roll are no longer with us, but their signatures remind me, and will always remind me, of a loyal, kind and generous folk. You yourselves must judge whether I have deserved your affection and obedience. I can only say that I have tried to serve you faithfully and to the best of my ability.

We have gone through much together, and I cannot look back without deep feelings of thankfulness to God for all the way that we have been led. Often the going has been hard, and sometimes the road rough. We have known sad times and happy ones, we have travelled in darkness and we have travelled in the brightest of clear light. We have shared sorrow and we have rejoiced together. There are achievements to record and there are failures, but throughout the years there has been no failure of your affection and kindness to me and my family. My wife and children and myself will always be grateful to you for the many happy years you have given us, and Newark must always hold a warm and lasting place in our hearts.

Now I have received a call to Old Partick Parish Church, and I feel bound to accept it. It has come unsought by me, as was the case fifteen years ago when you looked to Govan and decided on a young and inexperienced minister. Trustfully I put myself into your hands then, and I have not been disappointed. With the same trust I have made my decision to leave you, believing that this is God's will for me. No one likes leaving old and trusted friends,

and our break with you will be painful indeed, but I would not have it otherwise. I hope you will find a place in your prayers for us as we take our leave of you.'

The town gave us a great send-off. A public meeting was arranged to be held in the fine hall in the Lithgow Club. Father Keane was invited with many others to attend. Someone had the inspiration to include him among those who made speeches of farewell and goodwill. He said many kind things and concluded: 'There is a tale which could only come out of Ireland. The priest was walking on the hill which overlooked the little village on a bright summer's evening when he stumbled across a young man stretched out on the grass, with his chin cupped in his hands as he looked down on the village. "Hullo, Father," he said. "It's a lovely evening and it's a lovely village and do you see these lovely fights? Do you see the crowd outside Murphy's pub?—it's a lovely fight! And do you see the fight there outside Flannigan's store?—isn't it a lovely fight?—and, Father, do you see the fight outside the chapel?—my God—it's a lovely fight! And who started all thim lovely fights, Father? Surely *I* did!"'

Perhaps I had started a lot of fights, but something too had been accomplished. If the building of Newark sometimes haunts me it always holds me; if I think of Father Keane I am glad that I wrote a note of appreciation in the *Glasgow Herald* when he died a few months later:

'Simon Keane was more than just another hard-working parish priest who burned himself out in his prime with the demands and duties of an industrial parish. He went to Port Glasgow in 1938, when the town was only just recovering from a phase of industrial conflict and religious

bitterness. Some wondered whether he would stir up old feuds and relight ancient fires of controversy and thus add to the town's anguish and dispeace.

When within weeks of his coming he was seen with the neighbouring parish minister scattering an angry mob with a walking-stick which he brandished like a shillelagh there was no doubt he meant peace and would enforce it. From that day religious battles in all their ugliness have been unknown in the town.

Simon Keane combined in an extraordinary measure the simplicity of a child and the wisdom of a man of the world. Saints and fairies were familiar companions, but hard common sense was his guide in the ordinary day to day happenings. Despite the waves of gossip and prejudice typical of a small town, he chose his friends as he pleased and when he pleased; the unchanging warmth of his friendship was something worth possessing.

He was always a fine figure of a man, commanding and vigorous. It is easy to measure what he gave in honest fulfilment of his vocation; it is hard to measure what compensation he received for all that he renounced and at such great cost. He once said to me: "The Lord has been very good to you in this world. Perhaps my turn will come in the next."'

If I chuckle sometimes over my memories of Sir James I was proud to say of him when I came to write his obituary for the *Glasgow Herald*.

'The older men in the shipyard remember the apprentice with the long legs and red hair, who did a job twice as fast as anyone else. This consuming energy was a part of

Sir James's genius; an industry, a meeting, a plumbing system, an inaudible sermon, all clamoured to him for improvement. When he gave new baths and wash-house steamies to Port Glasgow, he went into every detail with as much enthusiasm as into the vast scheme for building the Liberty ships in America.

In an age of graded irresponsibility, he dared to stand out alone. He brought new methods into shipbuilding. When, between the wars, he saw the dangerous strength of Germany, the fatal weakness of the League, he embarked on a personal rearmament programme, incidentally saving and reorganizing single-handed two great firms, the strain of which caused his first serious illness. His was the responsibility and the blame—sensitively felt and defiantly borne—of damming the trickle of trade to keep alive some shipyards by closing others, and always the care of his own people the burden and concern of all he did.

The high road is the lonely road. Wealth never touched him. He came of Covenanting stock and his was "delight in simple things, and mirth which has no bitter springs". Fools he tholed; and the army of beggars, particularly from the Kirk, he treated courteously. What he could not abide was failure in integrity and forthright honesty in others, and that hurt him deep down. The standard he had set himself was demanding, and it disappointed him when his associates did not aim as high.

His philosophy of life was simple but profound—it was in fact an expression of his religious faith. Men have to work, then let them work hard and well. He had learned a trade in the shipyard, and he was always proud that he was himself a craftsman. The men knew that there was no department of shipbuilding which he had not mastered,

sometimes better than they had. He could spot the rivet that was faked and the welding that was shoddily done. For him honest work was service to the community, and by example he showed the way.

He did appreciate good work, whether it was done by plater or parson, and he never would make any real distinction in the importance of a job. Service, be it humble or great, was the "rent a man paid for his room on earth". Honours he refused simply because he did not work for rewards, and yet how like a delighted child given a toy he was when unexpectedly an honour came which he had to accept.

When the Second World War ended and he could be released from his responsible duties at the Admiralty, one dream possessed his heart—to return to his native Port Glasgow, to the small, sparsely furnished office in the yards which have made the name Lithgow world renowned. How little time he was given to do the things he wanted to do most, but long enough to deepen the affection of the folk of his own town! These last months of acute suffering were most bravely borne, his bright spirit never dimmed, and his laughter still broke through.

Sir James rose triumphant from the ruins of his strength. He devised bodily escape from the sickroom by a reconstructed service-hatch and attended launches and shot pheasants from a jeep. Mind and spirit never gave in to pain or weakness; and he directed affairs till within hours of his departure. Not requiescat but a blazing longship should be the last tribute; not to an industrialist, but to a last chief of Dalriada.'

If I long for anything now it is to have my own parish and my own people, for Newark taught me the meaning of these.

PART TWO

Partick

Another Battlefield

I DON'T think I had doubts about the wisdom of accepting the call to Partick until a group of the vacancy committee met with me and tried to obtain an undertaking from me that I would not in any way alter the form of Service and that I would do my best to maintain the existing tradition. It was all perfectly courteous and above board, and, when I pointed out that the conduct of worship was the minister's responsibility, the matter was not pressed. But I should have sensed that there was an undercurrent of suspicions about my intentions.

My predecessor had been a preacher of Highland fervour and inspiration. He had built up a crowded evening Service to which sermon-tasters throughout Glasgow had come. The beadle told me in awe that after most evening Services he would gather up as many as two basketfuls of toffee-paper left in the pews. I knew that I could not maintain this outstanding success for three possible reasons: I am not usually on the wavelength of the perfervid Scot; I could not match the preaching flair of my predecessor; I was primarily interested in making Partick a living parish church and not the mecca of those seeking a preaching thrill.

My first sermon to a crowded evening Service if not wise was at least honest. I declared that I hoped to relate the life of

the Church to what went on about our doors; that I was not particularly interested in bygone Scottish culture, but very interested in present Partick culture; that I would strive to declare the Word of God as I heard it; that I hoped this building would become a centre of living worship and a place of existential encounter with the living Christ; that by Word and Sacrament we would be knit together to do God's will in this historic parish church. Needless to say, that was the largest evening congregation I preached to in Partick during my ministry there.

I should have seen that the manse was a hopeless proposition from the start. It was the largest manse in Glasgow, and of that fact certain of the elders were inordinately proud. It was doubtless a delightful house to stay in when servants were available at slave price and coal could be supplied by the wagon-load for a few pounds; when the beadle looked after the garden as part of his duties and fired the conservatory in his stride; when the minister's stipend was one of the largest in Glasgow and he himself had a great many irons in very warm fires. I know Betty must have been dismayed at the prospect, but she did not complain and was game to have a go at any rate. My stipend was £750 a year and in the year 1950 its purchasing power was not all that great. To add to our fears, a land-mine had fallen nearby during the Glasgow Blitz, destroying the greenhouses and the conservatory, but we were assured that War Damage had made good most of the defects.

It was only as we moved into our first winter that we discovered that the blast had not just removed window-panes but that every door in every room had been so violently shaken that the draughts and winds of heaven found easy access through the gaps between door and frame. There was also a vast billiard-room on the top storey, which collected the

winds and draughts that missed the doors and sent them howling down the stairs. There was a vast basement with an echoing servants' hall and six cavernous rooms opening off it. I still marvel how we survived our winters in the manse and why my wife did not leave me. I imagine it must have been touch and go when the children and I were all sick at the same time and she was the only one on her feet. I hope elders who happen to read this will be moved to inspect the manses in which they house their ministers and their families. Perhaps had we not inherited such a manse, we might not have become so interested in the houses which surrounded my church.

I was made to realize two things from the start. First, that I was no longer a young minister with a disarming smile and no experience, and therefore not likely to blarney my way through difficulties. Second, that Kirk Sessions are not always primarily concerned to help and support their minister. If I had realized this at the start I perhaps would not have made so many mistakes in strategy, and possibly too I should have avoided some of the heart-breaks. It is, however, easy to be wise when looking back from the distance of time. One lesson which every minister ought to learn sooner than later is that his ministry will suffer, his preaching become harsh and his life become a misery unless he can enlist the support and forbearance of every member of his Kirk Session. Of course, there are the odd ones who are sent to try us, and it would be a pity not to have them, but a divided Session is a cancer in the life of any congregation. Perhaps the first duty of every minister is to convert his Session; perhaps, too, it is the area of his own conversion. I never really faced up to this in Partick, and so for four years the strain and the stress remained. We never became a fellowship at session level, and so failed to achieve it as a congregation.

My first rude awakening came when I discovered that my parish had been subdivided in the craziest fashion at the Union of the Churches in 1929 among four neighbouring churches, and Partick was left with a postage stamp of an area. With great enthusiasm we launched into a mission to the parish to discover that it consisted of the Western Infirmary, two flour mills, a small bit of the busy Dumbarton Road, one school, and a few tenements of reasonable housing and half a dozen streets of thoroughly bad slum property. Incidentally, it was soon quite clear that our congregation was drawn from widely scattered areas of Glasgow.

As if to mark out this division, this segregation, there were two Sunday schools: one in the gloomy church halls, for the children of members of the congregation; the other in a dirty, decrepit hall on the other side of Dumbarton Road, for the children of the parish. It was done innocently enough, and represented the desire of congregations to do mission work. It was the hang-over of the era of 'doing good to the poor'. Partick was not unique in this regard, and I was to find the same thing when I came eventually to the Mother Kirk of Scotland. The respectable were within the Church, others were outside and had to be approached as such: some parents came to church, others did not—so the process of segregation seemed obvious enough and inevitable.

The whole set-up seemed to me unchristian and self-defeating, but how to change it was the problem. The teachers of the superior Sunday school maintained that the parents would object if their children were asked to mix with those from the mission Sunday school, and the mission Sunday-school teachers claimed that their children did not like coming over to church—they were out of their depth. I set my teeth and pronounced that, as from a given date, there would be only one Sunday school.

Promptly, most of the teachers sent me their resignations. I should have accepted them. I now make a rule of accepting resignations when they come from church workers and office-bearers, for experience has taught me that you lay up trouble if you try and dissuade them from their intention. Resignations in writing should always be promptly acknowledged and accepted, especially if they are from people who seem to matter. I made the great mistake of going round each one individually to persuade them to accept the changes, telling them how important they were. The net result was that most agreed to give 'integration' a trial—they called it a 'fair' trial, but how seldom will prejudice recognize fairness?—and before another year was out I was forced to take decisive action after a wasteful year.

No! Resignations when honestly made should be honestly accepted, otherwise conviction becomes compromise and from compromise there comes crucifixion of someone.

My predecessor had been industrial chaplain to D. & W. Henderson, ship repairers, and soon after my induction I was invited to visit the yard. It was a warm and happy experience for me. Mr Pat Gifford, the managing director, was an exceptional man in so many ways. He had natural charm and graciousness, understood his men perfectly and was transparently fair and worthy of trust. The easy atmosphere I found in the yard could, I believe, be traced directly to this kind man, who had always the interests of his men at heart. He knew them and they in turn had a real affection for him. Every week I would have lunch with Mr Gifford, Mr Lee and his other fellow directors and then would go down the yards and meet the men in their canteen or talk with them in the holds of the ships which they were repairing.

Here I always felt at home.

The bell-ringer at Partick might have been a character from one of Dumas' novels. A dwarf of a man, with a face that belonged to another era, he never spoke and was seldom seen. He slipped up the tower, tolled the bell and disappeared again, and he never by any chance attended a service in the church. I found that he was employed by D. & W. Henderson repairing hoses, and I think he was kept on more for sentiment than for usefulness. The bell had worried me from the start. It sounded always like a death-knell, without resonance and seemingly always muted. At last I summoned up enough courage to invite the beadle to ascend the tower with me. It was a messy climb to where the bell hung but we made it. There was a bell all right—a large one—but it hung at half-cock as if it had suddenly stopped dead in orbit. I turned to the beadle in some astonishment and called out, 'The bell has jammed—it is off its axis.' To which he brightly replied, 'Of course it is, didn't you know?' He then recounted the story how at the Relief of Mafeking the bells of the churches in Glasgow had been rung out, Partick with the rest. Only in the case of Partick the bell-ringer was very drunk and so mightily tolled the bell that it swung over and stuck. From that day until the present what was heard was the clanging of the tongue against the stationary bell. A long rope attached to the ringer descended to the platform just above the vestibule, and solemnly for years all that happened was the striking of the stationary bell by a small lump of metal. The effort can have been negligible and the sound or lack of it of course was adequately explained.

I told the story to Pat Gifford, and he immediately offered to have some of the men from the shipyard come and swing it back into position, and make sure that it was properly and securely hung. This was too good an offer to refuse and I

immediately agreed. On a Monday morning the men moved in and throughout the week carried out what proved to be a delicate and difficult operation. Apart from the discovery that the joists which held the displaced bell were badly worn and in a dangerous condition, the metal cradle had rusted through. Had we not made this discovery there might well have been a serious accident. All was made safe and the bell was free to ring out unhampered. On the Sunday morning a bright and cheerful sound echoed from the belfry of Partick Parish Church. I watched the windows in the tenements nearby open and inquisitive faces look out. It was a new sound, bright, cheerful—an almost impudent sound and not at all like the hollow, dismal, deliberate clang that was connected with the church.

Just before the Service was due to begin an angry elder burst into my vestry. 'What have you done to our bell?' I explained that it had been repaired and was now as it once had been. To my amazement he turned on me angrily. 'How dare you spoil our bell—we liked it the way it was. I shall have this matter raised at the Kirk Session.' My disappointment was very real. I had looked forward to telling the congregation that the bell was back ringing as it was meant to sound, and here there were those who preferred the cracked sound with which they had become familiar to the clear music of a beautifully cast bell. All week I was to hear complaints from the older members of the congregation that they preferred the old sound to the new. Probably there is a moral to this story. In any case, the bell-ringer complained that it was now harder work.

Some days later I was visiting in the Western Infirmary. The story of the bell had not been long in spreading and my patient told me that the new clear sound came quite distinctly into the ward, and for the first time she had realized how close

the parish church was to the infirmary. Could I not ring out the bell sometimes so that they could hear it, for it had a comforting, friendly note and linked the infirmary with the church? Here was an idea worth following out. It stayed with me for a few weeks and then the plan came. Friday evening was a visiting day and many people passed the church on their way to visit relations and friends in the Western. Why not have a Service of Intercession for the sick each Friday evening, and ring out the bell so as to link the patients with us in this act of worship? I wondered why we had never thought of it before. So began one of the most valuable Services of the week.

I had notices printed which were put up in the Western drawing attention to the Friday Services. At first the response was poor, but gradually people began to drift in, and as we got names we prayed for individual patients. The bell was rung and gradually too the various wards understood that this meant that prayers for the sick were being offered in the parish church. In wards where there were nurses whom I knew, it became the practice for silence to be observed as the bell stopped and so the prayers of the church and the prayers of the patients were linked. Often distraught relations would join us, and I think they left us calmer and often comforted. To hear a father or wife or child prayed for by name was a deeply personal link.

It used to be the custom in the church where I grew up as a boy to have the names of the sick written and posted on an unobtrusive notice-stand which members would go over to and read as they passed through the roomy vestibule. I always think we make the vestibules of our churches far too mean and small. But this building in Edinburgh, which I knew so well, not only had benches on which one could sit but a good open space where members could meet and talk in comfort,

especially if it was a wet day. There was no chance of voices breaking into the church itself, for the great doors which separated the vestibule from the nave were designed not only to exclude draughts but also noise.

There were, however, not only prayers of intercession for the sick by name during the Eucharist but in the Thanksgiving mention was made by name of those who had made a good recovery. I still remember most vividly when I was quite small hearing a prayer of thanksgiving for the recovery of William Edward Whitley. I knew my father had been through a quite serious operation which had worried us all, and now the danger was over and how right that we should show our sense of gratitude in prayer. I am sure that the real place for living and personal intercession and also for genuine and heartfelt thanksgiving is in the weekly celebration of Holy Communion, whether it comes on the Sunday or any other day of the week. There is a wide and exciting field of discovery here for every parish church. The parish communion will become more and more the offering up of the life of the parish to be forgiven and blessed of God—it will become more and more the most important work of the Church. The Bread which we break will be seen to hold all the throbbing, creative energy of man, and the livingness of the world which found its completion and meaning in Christ; the Wine which we drink will taste of all the anguish, agony, suffering and sorrow of man, which found its fulfilment in the poured-out blood of Christ. It is only a matter of time before these great truths become central for us.

We also drew to these Friday evening Services down-and-outs, drunks and people close to despair. One night a lad came into my vestry in so much trouble that he was determined to take his life. I asked him how he was going to take his

life and he told me he was going to jump over the Kelvin Bridge. I invited him to come in to the Service and when it was over, if he was still minded to take his life, I would accompany him and jump over with him. After the Service I found him sitting quietly in my vestry. Would I go home with him? He felt equal to meeting his parents, confessing what he had done and trying to make good his terrible mistake. It doesn't always happen that way, but so often to unburden your heart is already to find the beginning of an answer to even the gravest problem.

The drunks were a heart-break to me. Here is one of the gravest social problems of our time. Often, when sober, they are delightful and lovable people, and yet the misery and tragedy they cause is sometimes too painful to discuss. It is a long and sometimes crucifying experience for some of them before they can be healed and cured. I am bound to confess that I had few successes with them in Partick. The most we usually did was to hold them until they were sober and then take them home.

Gradually, too, a core of people from the congregation made the Friday Service a must. Here, then, was a growing point for the fellowship and, although small, it mattered more and more. If we parish ministers had more courage we would cut out many of our present duties and concentrate on these growing points. As it is, we waste a great deal of valuable time trying to keep going an organization, an institution, which no longer with any stretch of imagination can be shown to be doing Christ's work. We have allowed the Holy Ministry to become a caricature. No wonder, then, that novels and plays and films so often make the minister look a foolish, narrow busybody. The minister who preached during the General Strike some years ago and said to his people: 'There is only

one profession that has never gone on strike, and is never likely to go on strike—the Holy Ministry! And do you know why they are not likely to go on strike? They wouldn't be missed if they did' maybe had something. The endless trotting round the faithful, lest they be offended; the continuing of organizations which have long ceased to fulfil any useful purpose; the meetings which we must open with prayer and which then proceed to make foolish any prayer ever offered; and the silly 'doing good' to people who don't want our left-handed charity. Sad as such misconceptions of the Church are, it is more sad to find that there are men who come into the Holy Ministry today believing that these things matter and are worth preserving.

I think what finally compelled me to look away from my congregation was a combination of three events. First, a Session Meeting. The whole evening had been a series of acrimonious discussions—I had so come to dread them that usually I could not sleep the night before a Session Meeting. As long as they attacked me I could hold the proceedings in reasonable order—but now there had been a quite unjustified attack by one member on another. I intervened as calmly as I could, and told the offending member to apologize or leave the meeting. He did neither. So I, as firmly as I could, moved towards him, signed that he must leave the meeting and led him to the door, which I gently closed behind him. The meeting then proceeded to a desultory end. I expected a series of resignations the following day—but none came, so I knew I was out on a limb by myself.

Second, a meeting of the committee of the Women's Guild. It was a meeting which I want to forget. It is now my solemn conviction that there can be no renewal of Christ's Church in Scotland until the powers of the Women's Guild are

considerably curtailed, and their purpose and existence severely scrutinized and criticized. This organization has become a Church within the Church—and while they have done much good work in raising funds and keeping the plant of the Church running, they have assumed such authority at local and assembly level that they now constitute a challenge to Presbyterian government. I am assured on all sides that without them the Church would die. I think the Church of Scotland ought to risk dying.

I am, of course, aware that today women make up the majority of our congregations, and of course the reason is that the menfolk have resiled from their religious responsibilities as they have in so many other ways. But without the man as priest in home and church, the home foundations weaken and the Church sickens with the sickness unto death. I remember climbing to the top flat of a tenement in Dumbarton Road with the intention of seeing the man of the house. I had previously told the children in the Sunday school that when I called I wanted to see the father of the house. The door opened and a little girl's face suddenly lit up. 'He's in,' and she led me through to the kitchen. 'The minister's here to see you, Dad.' There he was sitting at the table working out his arithmetical problems, permutations and combinations—that great mathematical exercise of the working man—the Pools. He looked a little taken aback, but I needled him about his poor attendance at church—this nettled him quite a lot. 'I let the wife out to the Women's Guild and I send the bairns to the Sunday school, what more can a man do?' That's it—that's what church has come to mean to most men—a place for the women and the bairns. And apparently we would have it so. I have had more vicious and uncharitable letters since I dared to challenge the place of the Women's

Guild in the Kirk than over all other awkward public questions in which I have been involved. I admire much of the work of the women of our churches, but unless we bring back the men the Church will remain crippled. The first priority of the Churches for the next decade ought to be the winning back of the men—without them, Sunday schools, guilds, youth fellowships are a waste of precious time.

And third—one Sunday a whole row of young parents stood before me with their babies for baptism. It was a lovely and to me a warming sight. As fine a bunch of young parents as you would hope to meet anywhere. After the children had been christened I turned as is my custom and said to the congregation, 'These children are not only the responsibility of the parents who stand before us but the responsibility of this congregation of which they are now a part.' I don't think anyone really felt a sense of responsibility for them, and perhaps I least of all. Mentally I resolved, as the parents and sponsors left the church, that I would visit every one of them in the week which followed.

Rats, Drains and W.C.s

THE next few days were to confirm something of which I had been dimly aware. With a few exceptions every house which I visited was either a 'single-end' or a 'room and kitchen' in slum property. As the overcrowded families had been moved out to new housing areas, young couples desperate for a place of their own had moved in. They had spared no effort to make the best of these grim, detestable, decaying buildings. Fresh paper and paint—their wedding gifts and furniture with real inspiration set to hide the poorness of their dwellings. For there was no running hot water, no bathroom, no lavatory—the common W.C. on the stair was what they had to use.

I saw it all in a flash. We were conditioning another generation to the squalor of the slums and no one seemed to care all that much. As long as the child was in its Moses basket the young mother would make a go of it and love's early discoveries would hold them close, but as soon as the child began to walk the real problems would begin—the dirty close, the common W.C., the streets for playgrounds—all that makes difficult the bringing up of a clean and healthy family. I had been months in my parish and had not seen the problems at my door—I had been wasting my time trying to

convert 'Christians' and been deaf to the cry of the needy beside me.

The following Sunday I took the Parable of the Good Samaritan for my text. The congregation settled—what is there new to say about the Good Samaritan?—in fact he has become rather a bore. Heads began to drop as I covered the familiar ground. Then, as a complete *non sequitur*, I began to describe the houses that I had visited during the previous week—I described in some detail one close where one W.C. had to serve twenty-seven families. By this time there was some stirring—not all of interest. Then I banged home my point: we had no right to be called a parish church if we were not conscience-stricken and disturbed by the conditions which I had described. These people were more than our neighbours—they were families for which we as a congregation were responsible. I ought to have persuaded the congregation, I ought to have taken them with me, I ought to have moved them to tears. Instead, I felt a cold wall of resistance and annoyance. The fault, I think, was mine.

As I wearily took off my robes in the vestry, the beadle announced a lady to see me. She burst in, in full sail, brandishing her umbrella like a spinnaker. 'How dare you mention such things in the pulpit of Partick? I have been a member for over fifty years and never have heard such disgraceful language. How dare you, sir, how dare you!'

I was too punctured to have any ready reply and weakly answered, 'I do believe that's what the parable means.'

'Nonsense, this is Communism—rank Communism,' she threw at me. Then, just before she swept out, she fixed me with her eye. 'I have given generously to this church through the years. Now, you can expect no assistance from me.'

I felt I had lost on every congregational front. I was wrong.

Late that night my telephone rang. It was an elder to ask what I proposed to do about the houses which I had described in my sermon—and could he do anything to help. Obviously I was expected to do something—but where to begin? Across Dumbarton Road from the church was Thurso Street. It was in my parish, and I had one church member in the top close. She was a grand person, full of character and energy and a real sense of humour. She had lived all her days in Partick and had magnificently triumphed over every obstacle and difficulty.

When I called in the early evening I found her bathing the two children in a zinc bath which she had placed in front of the kitchen range. There was no running hot water, she had had to boil kettles of hot water on the gas ring to make this nightly operation possible. I was shown round the house—it was a room and kitchen. Her husband had recently papered both rooms, but already the paper was beginning to peel off—you could see the dampness coming through the walls. Then we went up to the first landing where was the W.C. which was working. The one on the ground level was in an appalling state—choked and overflowing into the passage and out into the backyard. It was explained to me that the men came in from the pub on the corner and made a mess of the place, and she had given up trying to keep it clean, for every time she put a new lock on the door some drunk hoofed it open. The one on the first landing had no window and no lock, and no seat on the pan. It was used by all the families on the ground and first landings. The windows on all landings were non-existent and it took little imagination to see the plight of a sick child or adult on a winter's night making for this single place of relief.

It appalled me. Could the factor or the owner of the

property not do something? Full of self-righteous indignation, I descended on the factor and demanded that he do something to alleviate the awful conditions of the property. Patiently, he told me that the income which was drawn from the rents could not begin to look at the repairs necessary. If I wished he would show me the books. In fact, if I was anxious to do something for the place, he would be ready to sell the entire block to me for a few pounds. There was no line of advance here. I then asked would he have any objection to my trying to 'redd up' the property, if I could find the money to do it. He replied that I was welcome to try anything I liked, as long as I did not ask him for any money. The dim outline of a scheme had begun to take shape in my mind. Why not try and get the people in the closes to team up and try some sort of self-help?

Back I went to my friend. What chance was there of lining up the men to do something about the place if only for the children's sake? There was a real possibility that I could raise the money necessary. She thought it not a bad idea, and she was sure her husband would play, but I would have to get round the other families and test out my powers of persuasion. I spent a couple of evenings visiting every family and was persuaded that most of the men would play. Now for the money?

I telephoned Lady Lithgow and asked if she would come and look over a bit of my parish. I knew she would be interested in what I wanted to do. Immediately she agreed to come on a tour of inspection. The next day together we covered the ground with which I was now only too familiar. We met my friend in the top close—she was in great form and full of enthusiasm for my plan and she and Lady Lithgow hit it off at once. As we dawdled to the top of Thurso Street

after a very thorough look-see, Lady Lithgow said, 'I will let you have a cheque for £1,000'—just like that! We were off!

Excitedly, I returned to the close and we decided what we would do. First whitewash and paint the tenement from top to bottom; second, clean out the W.C.s; then, employ plumbers and joiners to repair the landing windows and put in new doors and plumbing. My friend agreed to buy the materials and brushes and we set Saturday afternoon for zero hour.

Expectantly, I arrived on the Saturday—the paint, the brushes, the whitewash, the ladders were all there, but no men. The reason was soon explained to me. A neighbour had said that the trade unions would object to and penalize the men for working without union permission. I had not thought of this as a snag, but certainly it looked like one. Patiently I sought out a trade-union official and explained to him what I was at. He assured me that there could be no objection if the men were doing up their own homes and in their own time and were not receiving payment for the work.

Early the following week I went round the families again, pointing out that this difficulty had been smoothed out. So zero hour was set for the following Saturday afternoon.

Hopefully, I returned in an old suit, prepared to lend a hand myself. Once more the birds were flown—this time to Ibrox to see a football game. The trouble was that a neighbour had said that he had heard on the best authority that if the property was improved the rents would go up. There was nothing for it but to lay this rumour. On the Monday I got a letter from the factor, which I had dictated to him, saying that no increase would be made to the rents if we carried out the work which I had outlined. And once more I knocked

at the door of every house in the close and zero hour was set for the following Saturday afternoon.

Anxiously I appeared on the Saturday. What snag would I find this time? True enough, my men had flown again. The reason this time—a kind neighbour had pointed out that for Protestants and Catholics to work together under the leadership of the parish minister would give rise to religious difficulties, and the priests would most certainly disapprove of such activities. It began to look as if we would never get under way. There was nothing for it but to begin and hope for the best. My friend and I started with brush and paint to the enjoyment of the children. 'Away and get your dad,' she called to one of the children. 'He'll be at Partick Cross.' In minutes he showed up, and in minutes he was in his dungarees and had taken command. A door across the way opened and a man who I knew was a painter by trade joined in. We really were off!

Through the week I employed joiners and plumbers to do the professional work of putting right windows, doors and lavatories, and then on the Saturdays we all got going at the whitewash and painting. The whole street would stop by and watch, and the children thought it all great fun. The problem was: Would the men from the pub continue to use the entry as a public lavatory and would the kids scribble on the fresh whitewash? I need not have worried. The women said, 'You leave the men and the bairns to us—we'll put the fear of God into them.' And they did. The fresh clean smell of the close remained, and no dirty words were scribbled on the walls.

The completion of the first close was an event that called for a celebration, because something really worth while had been accomplished. We crowded into one of the flats, drank tea and ate cakes and discussed what to do next. The

men had enjoyed doing the work but, more important, a new friendship, a new neighbourliness, had been found among the various families. One man told me that this was the first time he had got to know the folk on the stair. Incidentally, each man had started to paper and paint his own house with material which I was able to supply, and this greatly delighted the womenfolk. It was resolved to offer a hand to the next close. So once more I visited the various tenants and explained what we were after. There was no hesitancy this time, perhaps not unconnected with the pressure from the children who had taken great delight in seeing the places cleaned up.

To cut a long and wonderful story short—every close on one side of Thurso Street was given first-aid treatment. There was a significant difference in each close as we proceeded—not only that the support was easily forthcoming but that improvements were made—a band of colour separated the paint from the whitewash—then a frieze took the place of line—we began to have artistic ideas about painting and this produced a healthy competition. And, contrary to all predictions, the cleanliness was not lost nor the bright colours defaced.

When in 1955 the University of Glasgow bestowed on me the honour of a doctorate in divinity, I said to the Chancellor, Lord Boyd-Orr, that surely this was the first time a D.D. had been bestowed upon a man for whitewashing closes. He replied with sudden quickness, 'Better whitewashing closes than whitewashing sepulchres.'

The publicity given by the newspapers, who were very discreet and did not at first mention the name of the street where the work was going on, brought in offers of help in money and in kind. One firm offered, and gave us, unlimited quantities of paint, and I think the firms who repaired the

roofs and the lavatories did not overcharge me. But the publicity also brought some quaint requests and new jobs.

One Saturday morning a little terrier of a fellow was shown into my study. I was struggling desperately to put together a sermon and my visitor was not terribly welcome. He stumped up to my desk, banged a box on it, whipped off the lid and demanded, 'How would you like to meet that on your breakfast table in the morning?' It was a great whopping rat! Even I was taken aback. He explained that there was an epidemic of rats in Walker Street. They were biting the kids in their cots, and eating the children's clothes, as well as every bit of food that was left unprotected. The people had complained to the sanitary authorities but so far nothing had been done.

I was anxious to get rid of the fellow and to get on with my sermon, and carelessly, not meaning very much what I said, told him: 'Look, away down to Walker Street and tell the folk to collect all the rats they can. I will come down on Monday morning and take them as a gift to the Lord Provost at the City Chambers.' This appeared to satisfy him and he collected his box and specimen, promising to meet me at 9.30 on Monday morning in Walker Street. I heaved a sigh of relief and continued to wrestle with the dead material of a sermon, hoping fervently that there would be no further interruptions.

Just before lunch my telephone began to ring. A newspaper man: Was the story in the *News* true? Was I really proposing to collect rats for the Lord Provost? My tummy began to play tricks. What had I done now? Soon it became apparent, as my telephone continued to ring most of the afternoon, what had happened. My friend with his unsavoury offering under his arm had left the manse only to walk whack

into the arms of a local reporter who, with unerring instinct, had sensed a possible story. He had asked the little man what he was doing at the manse and he promptly had replied, 'Consulting him about rats.' Then the story came out. I had been well and truly caught on the hop. What had been an excuse to let me get a sermon done was now the news of Glasgow. I was on a spot. I didn't want to collect rats and I did not want to see the Lord Provost.

I spent a miserable week-end wondering how things would work out. On the Monday I went down to Walker Street to keep my appointment. Sure enough, he was there waiting for me, but he was empty-handed. To my immense relief, I was told a rat-catching squad from the city sanitary department had been in operation over the week-end, and the tenants had been informed that any rats which they might catch must be handed over. It was a regulation which had to be observed. There were then no victims for me and my visit to the City Chambers would not be necessary. At any rate, my suggestion had not been without results. The attention of the authorities had not only been drawn to an unsatisfactory state of affairs but the city itself had been made aware of the appalling conditions under which some parents were struggling to bring up their families. I went round some of the houses in Walker Street and was given sufficient evidence—half-chewed food and clothes, and a scar on one child's arm—that my visitor's call had been more than justified.

Soon after I was to be drawn again into the Walker Street orbit. This time a woman called on me to let me know that a number of the children in the street were in hospital—there had been an outbreak of dysentery. She blamed the choked sewers and the overflow from out-of-order W.C.s. The refuse liquid accumulated in the back courts and the children

played among the filth, thereby drawing infection. I telephoned the public-health authorities to make inquiry, only to be told that this was a seasonal epidemic and everything was well in hand. The woman had told me that something like twenty children from the street were in hospital. I tried to find out if this was an accurate figure, as it happened that I was due to make a television appearance on a 'Special Inquiry' programme on housing in Scotland and I knew I had to be sure of my facts. Try as I would, no one would give me the exact number of children in hospital from Walker Street. I had even tried the various infectious diseases hospitals, to be told that I was not an authorized person and therefore could not be given what was after all confidential information.

Then I had an inspiration. I knew the gateman at one of the hospitals. I rang him and, as innocently as I could, told him that there were some children from my parish in hospital—there had been an outbreak of dysentery or something like it and, as I did not want to trespass on the priest's preserve, would he read the names over to me, and I could quickly spot my own flock. 'Sure,' he answered, and in a moment or two began to read out names, helping me to separate the Protestants from the Catholics. I had exactly what I wanted—the numbers in this hospital, plus the spread-out over the other hospitals in the city, gave me a very fair estimate. That evening I was able to drive home a point with such emphasis that it was obvious that I had more information than I was prepared to disclose.

Meantime, I had to do something about offers of assistance. One Friday after our evening Service a delightfully vague young man came into my vestry and questioned me about what we were trying to do about housing conditions in my parish. He thought he might be able to interest a few of his friends if I could offer a quite specific task. Operation Thurso

Street was near completion and I had not thought much about the next step. Quickly making up my mind I suggested: 'What about taking over Dunaskin Street and doing something about the litter, the muck, the squalid parts, the bins or lack of them in the backyards? Come and I'll show you what I mean.'

We went to the house of a bed-ridden woman whom I knew. Her single room was at the corner of Dunaskin Street and Thurso Street, and her one window looked full on a great crumbling filthy midden. Her gas burned all day. On a previous visit she had shown me this heap of accumulated filth, on which children, cats, dogs and rats poked about. In hot weather the stench was such that she had to keep her window closed all the time. In the Glasgow slums it is not only the houses which crumble and decay but also the middens in the backyards. They are a curiously Glasgow device for dealing with the refuse in tenement blocks. In the middle of the night or the small hours of the morning, twice a week (that was the frequency when I first got to know Dunaskin Street), men from the cleansing department thunder through the closes with great baskets on their backs, into which they shovel the muck from the middens. It is a noisy operation as well as an unpleasant one for these night scavengers, and sometimes the whole close is awakened. The reason why there were no proper bins was that those supplied by the Corporation were usually pinched, and now they had given up supplying new ones. So the refuse was dumped into the collapsing brick framework which once held bins—these were the middens of Dunaskin Street. My noncommittal guest was duly upset by the conditions he had seen, and promised to discuss the proposed project with his friends and let me know their reactions. This was to be my first meeting with these remarkable people whom we call the 'Friends'.

Within a few days I had my reply—a group of Quakers were ready and willing to take over Dunaskin Street and right away. We had a preliminary survey and decided to draw up a new design for a midden: fortunately one of their number was an architect. Finally a drawing gave us what we felt was necessary—a solid structure which would hold a number of bins which we would supply: easy of access, but with sufficient protection from children and dogs and cats. On paper the ‘Whitley’ midden seemed just the job, but none of us had ever mixed cement or laid a brick. All attempts to enlist help from the menfolk in the street was unavailing—somehow the example of Thurso Street had not raised any enthusiasm round the corner. In any case, conditions were if anything worse. The street had been condemned by the local authorities, and there was therefore a natural reluctance to do anything which might prolong the life of the street and delay its being pulled down. The ‘Friends’, however, went ahead.

One Saturday afternoon a load of bricks and sand and cement was dumped in the street, and we spent the afternoon manhandling the stuff into the back court, to the great enjoyment of the children and the amusement of the adults. It took us until darkness fell to carry out this operation. By this time the children were building sand-castles with the sand and houses with the bricks; all that remained secure was the cement, which we had locked in a rotting back kitchen. No building started—but a good time was had by all. One young couple whose back window was almost level with the court promised to keep an eye on the material. This couple were our first allies. They had two children, and though their kitchen was just habitable, their front room was running with damp and smelt evilly. They proved to be a tower of strength to us and were soon counted among the ‘friends’.

On the following Saturday we met to begin the serious business of construction. The sand had been scattered the length and breadth of the refuse-strewn back court, the bricks had been used to make a dry path through the muddy sludge which lay in its middle. Our first messy job was to assemble the material in one accessible spot. The children happily joined with us: it was a new kind of game. All the kitchen windows had been pulled up, and a sceptical audience watched our patient efforts.

The great moment came when we started to mix the cement. Our leader had inquired from a builder the main details concerning the correct method, and so we started. A bag of cement was emptied out and buckets of water were poured on by the women members of our party, while the rest of us hastily and hopefully shovelled on the sand. It looked a pretty mess and we stood regarding it rather helplessly. Suddenly a bellow came from one of the grandstand windows. 'That's not the bloody way to mix cement, wait a minute.' In no time a man was standing beside us. He swung off his jacket and started throwing instructions at us. He knew what he was about all right—he was a builder's operative. As if it were all part of the programme, we let him have his way. 'Now get on with laying the frame for the foundation.' Just as helplessly we started to carry out his orders, his curses ringing in our ears. Then he stopped, as if suddenly struck with some deep thought. He gave a half-look at the windows and then yelled up at them, 'Come on down here, Jim and Bill and Pat, and give the bastards a hand.'

The miracle had happened. Here were men who knew their work, the sight of silly fools messing about with wood, cement and bricks was more than they could stand. To their eyes it was a form of sacrilege. Merrily, the work continued until

night fell, and lo and behold a thick foundation of cement was framed and laid, and the outside shell of bricks was begun. It really was a triumph, for all four men offered to give us a hand the next day—Sunday. The Quakers had no qualms about agreeing, but I wondered what my flock would think if they knew that in my heart I felt I would be doing more useful work with them than preaching a couple of sermons which no one particularly wanted to hear anyway. To salve my own conscience, I put on an old pair of trousers and went down to lend an inadequate hand between Services.

My arrival was greeted by most of Dunaskin Street with cheerful grins. Not for a long time had there been such useful entertainment in the street for a Sunday. The kids were having a high old time, too—the wife of our leader, herself a university lecturer, had supervised the making of a real sand-pit; and all afternoon processions of children with pails of water created a pool for one of the most remarkable regattas that ever took place within hailing distance of the Clyde itself—the gallant boats were cork and paper and bits of stick. With astonishing simplicity of approach, the Quakers soon had won a place in the respect of the street. I was to hear them described with admiration and respect as ‘these bloody Christians’.

It took a few weeks to complete the first midden and to install the first bins. The City Engineer rescued us from what could have been an awkward situation. We had completely failed to take note that permission to erect our middens ought to have been received from the Planning Authorities. It was whispered in my ear that I was liable for a fine and the possibility of having to pull down what had so patiently, and with so much wonder and fun, been created. I called on the City Engineer and told him my sad tale, pleading innocence and ignorance as I showed him the drawings. He said they

were competently prepared. 'Now let us go and visit the scene of operations.'

He bundled me into his car and drove without comment to Dunaskin Street, which apparently he knew quite well. The midden was carefully examined—yes, it would do, it was safe, and it was quite original: he would happily approve the plans and see them through official channels. 'By the way,' he added, 'I should be glad to supply you with the first set of bins. I'll have them delivered down this afternoon.' With that he left me, assuring me for my own information that the sooner the whole street was pulled down the better. I think he knew perfectly well what was going on all the time and I think, too, that he was on our side. Bless him!

I could now safely leave Dunaskin Street to the Quakers. They were welcome and accepted visitors in the street, and they started in to paint up the houses and the closes, did baby-watching and took the grannies for runs into the country. They have a natural bent for doing the right thing at the right time; they have an infinity of patience; they care about people without being sentimental; and they are not afraid to dirty their hands; and it is all fun and laughter and silent prayer.

Laughter in Heaven

WITH all this activity of 'redding up' and keeping clean I could not miss the moth-eaten appearance of the front of the parish church. Half a dozen tired, dusty little trees struggled to draw subsistence from the slimmest soil and the collection of empty bottles, cans and the visitations of the army of cats which inhabited the environs of Dumbarton Road. When I came to Partick I had the large notice-board painted the brightest of reds, in an effort to add some colour to the drabness of Church Street. Needless to say, there had been some opposition, why I have never been able to understand, and when I passed that way a few months back I saw that it had again been painted black. *Sic transit . . . ?*

I had the idea that we should plant some bulbs round the trees, and hoped that all nutrition had not departed from the soil. In faith, we planted 200 assorted bulbs. In the spring I visited the neighbouring school, told the children what had happened and sought their co-operation in preventing their being plucked or torn up when they appeared. A few green shoots belatedly showed their anxious heads. Seven daffodils struggled to life, marvellously survived, and for a few days proudly showed their yellow crowns to the passing traffic until the cats and the dust had done their worst. But we had

proved that something could grow and that the children would leave them alone.

It was at this stage that I met Tommy. He and his gang hung about Partick Cross. When first I met him he had the most wonderful drape suit, sharp-pointed shoes and what looked to me like a shoe-lace for a tie. He had seen me tinkering about the plot in front of the church, hailed me through the massive railings which somehow had survived the drive for scrap metal during the war and mocked me and my garden. Round he came to give me advice. I was not setting about things in the right way. Nothing stood a chance of growing until there was wire netting to keep out the cats, and the ground properly dug and manured. He laid it off to me in a torrent of words and he knew what he was talking about. 'Look, minister, me and my friends will lend a hand, but no interference from the big-wigs in the Kirk—no interference, otherwise we'll no' touch it.' I am no gardener—I have neither the patience nor the touch, and I knew absolutely nothing about plants. Gratefully and fearfully I accepted this offer of conditional help. This had to be handled gently, though, and I cautiously approached the Session to put up wire netting and this was agreed to. Next I asked permission for me and some friends I knew to turn up the soil and plant flowers; this also was accepted. No questions were asked, but no one really believed that very much could be made to grow. I don't think I felt myself that very much could flourish in such an area.

Tommy then visited the manse, and told me that they would need the ruined greenhouses to prepare and bring on the plants. It was only then that I discovered that he was employed with the City Parks Department. He never argued, did Tommy, he took over and then got to work. Already

matters were out of my hands and all I could do was to stand back and watch. Digging commenced in front of the church and behind the manse, and we were in it up to our necks with this effervescent young man in command.

The gang accepted Tommy without question. His word went and his laughter won. He blew in and out of the manse as a member of the family, talking incessantly but organizing something always. Seeds and seedlings were planted and the mystery of growth was there for our beholding. The children loved his visits and his chatter.

Soon the appearance in front of the church was changed beyond recognition. Flowers were growing not just in rows but in shapes and patterns. Most nights Tommy and his gang were on the job, hailing the passers-by when they were not weeding and planting out, and generally giving the impression that they had taken over not only a desolate piece of ground but the church and all its works. One night he took me aside. 'Look, boss, I've been speaking to the fellahs and we've decided that it's time we joined the church. What's in it for joining the church?' I explained that usually there was a class of instruction before each of the communion seasons, and that I would be happy to take them in whenever the next class started. This did not please him at all. 'Look, boss, I've talked them into this and I can't guarantee that you'll get them unless you do something now. What about starting a class on Sunday and I'll have them all there?'

There was no arguing with him, so it was resolved to begin as he suggested. On Sunday twenty of them trooped in just as the evening Service was scaling—teddy-boys they looked and teddy-boys they were. As soon as the instruction was over, I was again taken aside and informed that they had decided that it would be a good thing to start dancing in the

Halls of a Saturday evening. It would keep the fellahs together, like. And so dancing began and more trouble for me, because some of my flock did not approve of dancing in a church hall.

Whether as a reward for my co-operation or simply yet another sign of Tommy's church 'take-over' bid, I was told that the lot of them intended to come to the evening Service. The excuse given was that it looked better than just clattering in as the congregation was leaving after the Service. I admit that their gay clothes worried me a little, and their cheerful greeting of elders and congregation brought on a few glum looks, but it was like a gale of wind coming into the stuffiness of our normal Sunday-evening proceedings. The next move was to bring their girl friends. I had the suspicion, however, that Tommy was making this a condition for coming to the Saturday-night dancing. As long as the class lasted they gaily trooped into the evening Service. After their confirmation, however, signs of rebellion began to show in the gang. Quite clearly the congregation was not ready to hold them and the pattern of our evening Service was not on their wavelength—this I knew perfectly well. They had, however, loyally kept their bargain. They had given the church a trial and what they had seen and experienced had not impressed them. There had been grumblings on the part of some of the elders and congregation, and I rather fear that every opportunity was taken to make them aware that they were not welcome. I should have known that the integration of parish and congregation, of youth and age, needed a lot more working out. Congregations tend to become closed shops, and how they resent change!

If they were lost to the congregation they were not lost to the church. There was still the garden which they tended with devoted care, there was still the manse which they took over most week-ends, and, until they were finally ejected from

the Halls, there was still the dancing on the Saturday. If I had failed them they did not fail me—they had in some wild and happy way made a place of greenness for me in a desert stretch of my ministry.

Meantime, our efforts to do something about the housing in the parish had not passed unnoticed by the Presbytery of Glasgow. A Committee on Housing had been set up with myself as Convener. This was a most significant step, for it meant that the Church had really taken to heart the terrible conditions which prevailed in many parishes within the city bounds. A survey of housing conditions was made over a wide area and a report was compiled and printed. It was no mean achievement for a committee to persuade the largest Presbytery in the world to agree to such statements as:

‘Since Christ came in a body, what happens to the bodies of men anywhere is, for Christians, a matter of concern. Since St Paul prayed that men’s “souls and bodies might be preserved entire unto everlasting life”, what happens to men’s bodies has eternal significance. The body is the temple of the Holy Ghost.

Concern for right Housing, therefore, is a religious obligation on all Churchmen.

Through the centuries, Churchmen have expressed that concern in differing ways, dictated by the changing pattern in the relation between body and spirit, Church and State. In modern democracy, the main avenue open to Churchmen to fulfil this obligation is through their political allegiance. Right Housing, that is to say, cannot be achieved by approaching it in isolation. Availability of material, of labour, of capital are all involved. These in turn are dependent at any given time on their place in

the priority list of the nation's needs. How many men, how many bricks, how much capital can justifiably be diverted from other claims—such questions are immediately raised in approaching any solution; and on such questions Churchmen will differ like other men. Again, what laws of property must be modified, what schemes of development inaugurated, will again divide Churchmen as they divide other men.

It follows that any *solution* of the Housing problem cannot normally be separated from party politics through which alone Churchmen can actually affect the situation. And your Committee are concerned to make clear that while it is an obligation on Churchmen in this, as in every other, issue to rise above the temptations of passing political advantage, none the less only by committed political activity can a Churchman in fact affect the situation at all. To stand short of political involvement by reason of the complexities of the issue is an understandable temptation; none the less so to stand short is to falter in our obligations as Christians to be concerned in this regard for the bodies of men.

There are however times when an issue becomes so menacing that the ordinary channels of political solution are inadequate. The Housing issue has achieved this proportion and there seems no likelihood of solution short of a common approach by all parties.

To further this possibility it is right that a Court of the Church should review the facts in order that all Churchmen within the bounds be apprised of the extent of the issue and thereby advocate a national rather than a party approach.

It is also right that, when there are rumours that the

Church might be profiting from a scandalous situation, a Court of the Church should examine the facts either to annul the rumour or to remove the scandal.'

I am not by nature a committee man, but I am proud to have belonged to this committee, and to have had a hand in preparing what I still believe was a significant church document.

The tragedy is that it was too late. The voice of the Church was no longer heeded—we had lost not only the common man but his respect too. There was now no place for the Church which had ceased to care for him, in his life, and my own growing awareness was that there was no life in the churches, only business organization, religiosity. If we represented doctrine, dogma and a social gospel we also represented the dead past. If we claimed to do traffic in the things of God we could no longer demonstrate that the Presence of God was in our churches—at best there was the aching awareness of the Presence of the Absence of God.

Frantically, feeling that time was short, I tried to do something to the building of Partick, too; it seemed to remind me more than anything else of the death of God. The Kirk Session agreed to move the 'organ' from the most conspicuous place in the church to the side and to make seemly the little area that held the holy table. It was once more for me an exercise in church lay-out. I seemed to have been doing it all my ministry—trying by outward sign and symbol to bring back the Glory of God to the buildings that claimed His Name. Mervyn Noad took over and planned the reconstruction.

But this time my heart was not in it. The glory is in the face of Christ and if He is no longer livingly present in our

churches, nothing we can do with art and music can make the glory real. I feel it on my conscience that I pushed the good people of my congregation into this expense without having first convinced them that it was necessary. It was a last desperate measure to give some meaning to what I was trying to do. If in Newark I had found a congregation and searched for a parish, in Partick I had lost a congregation and found a parish, but I had not yet found the secret of making the congregation serve and give itself for the parish. If I had found people, real people, with real needs, about my church door, I had not succeeded in making the Church real to them. In fact was I any nearer believing in the Church which I saw than when first I heard the Call of God to serve Him in the Ministry of His Church? Was I looking all the time for the wrong things? More and more my sermons spoke of the betrayal of Christ by the Churches. There was a harsh and sometimes angry note seldom absent from my preaching voice, and I must have hurt far more than I helped.

One night in June 1954 Betty and I had just returned to the manse when the telephone rang. It was Charles Warr from the manse of St Giles'. In the warmest and kindest way he told me that I was about to be invited to become his colleague and successor, and he wanted to be the first to tell me. He hoped very much that I would accept the Call when it came. The next morning the newspapers had the story—it was front-page news.

The exciting weeks that followed gave me little time to think out the full implications of what had happened. In due course I preached as sole nominee, was duly elected, and the date of my induction was set for the last week in September. Throughout the summer, letters of goodwill came to me from all over the Church, and I had reason to believe that the

choice made by the congregation of the High Kirk of Edinburgh, though utterly unexpected, was not an unpopular one. A few days before the Service of Induction my mother died. She had been ill for many months and had suffered great pain, but the thought of my coming to St Giles' had given her great happiness and pride. It had been the fulfilment of all her hopes for me.

On my first Sunday my colleague had graciously consented to preach me in, and his words addressed to the large congregation, assembled in this most loved of all Scottish churches, moved me deeply. At one point he said:

'It is a pleasing tradition of the Scottish Church that a minister invites a brother minister formally to introduce him to his people on the first Sunday after his induction to a charge. With his characteristic courtesy Dr Whitley extended that invitation to me and I deeply value his gesture. There were so many of high distinction he could have asked, each one of whom would have felt profoundly honoured by the invitation.

On a February Sunday evening, almost twenty-nine years ago, a young man sat on a chair close by the Royal Pew and listened to me preaching my first sermon as Minister of St Giles'. The wheel of Destiny has come full circle, and tonight, from this pulpit, he will preach his first sermon as my colleague and successor.

I knew Dr Whitley in his student days at the University of Edinburgh where he graduated in Arts. He was a keen, vital, happy youth, who even then gave one the impression that he was born to leadership. And though his lot thereafter was cast in the West of Scotland, I followed his career with growing interest and admiration. On the

outbreak of war in 1939 he came closely under my notice again, for it was owing to his drive and enthusiasm, and the respect in which he was held by the late Sir James Lithgow of Port Glasgow, one of the greatest captains of industry of our times, that our Church was able to establish without delay one of the first hostels for the Allied armies in Europe. It was in France, in the town of Lille, and, with Dr Whitley in charge, it was appropriately called Port Glasgow House. But for the Fall of France, and the resultant ending of the Church of Scotland's hut and canteen work on the Continent, young Whitley, with his flair for administration, his fresh and novel ideas, his eager spirit, and his unerring instinct for the right approach to the men he was out to help and serve, would have made Port Glasgow House one of the brightest jewels in the crown of the Church of Scotland's war-time service.

As a young man, Dr Whitley did not lightly enter the ministry of the Church of Scotland. He did so only after a long and earnest spiritual pilgrimage which involved the pain of farewell to the communion in which he was born and bred. To that communion, however, honoured for the piety and loyalty to conviction of its people, the grandeur of its incomparable liturgy, and the exquisite beauty of its worship, he has recently rendered signal service; for, in his history of the Catholic Apostolic Church, the standard work on the Irvingite movement has at last appeared. The loss of the Methodists to the Church of England was a shattering disaster to English christianity; and, though not comparable in magnitude, the loss of Edward Irving and his followers to the Church of Scotland was a grievous disaster too.

Like many others of his generation, Dr Whitley was

drawn to the ministry by the crisis of modern society. Consumed by a passionate love for his fellow men, especially the over-burdened and the under-privileged, and by a conviction that only through an inspired and enlightened leadership on the part of the Christian Church could man ever find his personal, social and economic salvation, he decided to enter the holy ministry. It was this outlook that drew him immediately to fields where the fight was hardest, the drift from and suspicion of the Church was greatest, and where the complex problems of industry and human relationships—those problems on which the future of the modern world depends—were at their starkest and most challenging. So, as an assistant minister he went to Govan; then as a parish minister to Port Glasgow; and then to Old Partick.

He has fought a splendid fight these last twenty-odd years. He carried the message of the Gospel through much initial hostility, into the great hives of industry in a manner unequalled by any clergyman of his generation. He broke through all opposition by his transparent selflessness and sincerity, and he became trusted and respected by management and workers alike. His departure from Clydeside is regarded there as a heavy and irreparable loss. He has been in the forefront of the struggle for better housing conditions for the people, and he has brought within the influence of the Church troops of tough and turbulent young men and women nurtured on the Marxist doctrine that religion was an opiate for the people. Robust and fearless, gay and compassionate, Dr Whitley has no scorn in him save for the mean and the second-rate in thought and conduct, and for the clichés and empty phrases that are the comfort of petty men; he has no hatred in him, save for entrenched

selfishness and indolent indifference to the needs of the world for which the Saviour died. . . . I hope he will offer us many new ideas, and will be able to effect not a few improvements upon our congregational and parochial activities. The Church, of all institutions, must be always ready for change, prepared for adventure and experiment, and ever alert to equip itself to meet the needs of a rapidly changing society. Everywhere, and at every point, the Church today is being challenged to adjust itself to a world whose social—yes, and ecclesiastical—structures are quite clearly in the melting-pot. In all that Dr Whitley may seek to do, give him your support, your sympathy and your eager co-operation. He is assured of mine, for whatever time I may remain his colleague.'

With so much goodwill, one would have been without a soul and imagination not to be stirred and humbled. In the evening I preached my first sermon as the new minister of St Giles'. I took for my text words which Edward Irving had once made memorable, 'For what reason have you sent for me?'

I could not know what the future would hold as I said:

"Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for. I ask you therefore, for what intent have you sent for me." Acts 10, verse 29. 29

I should be lacking in imagination and a sense of romance were I not this evening both thrilled and humbled. Thrilled by the opportunity and challenge that you have given me, humbled by the knowledge of the great traditions in which I now stand. From all over Scotland, indeed

from many parts all over the world, letters have come to me, some with blessing, some with advice, but all with encouragement. Two extracts I must give, "don't be too overawed by the great names of those who have gone before you, but learn from them and give thanks, don't lose touch with simple things and ordinary people, but above all love your people and serve them". Cameron Lees's whole charge to Norman Maclean when inducted to Colinton was "My dear brother, you have already served the Church in two parishes and showed that you are in no need of exhortation. My advice to you is only this, Be no man's servant, but be the servant of all. God bless you."

I would not be telling the truth if I said that I was not awed by the achievements of Cameron Lees, Wallace Williamson and Charles Warr—these are names honoured, revered and rightly praised throughout the Kirk of Scotland. Each brought his own distinctive contribution to the unique history of St Giles'. But the awe which I feel cannot overwhelm me because fortunately I shall have beside me Dr Warr to advise, to reprove, to rebuke and to inspire me in the years that lie immediately ahead.'

I had no compelling message to give, only the muted word which comes from a deep sense that God had called me to this new task and responsibility—there could be no other explanation and I was grateful.

St Giles'—a Postscript

ST GILES' meant for me a return to familiar scenes and places. Was this to be in every sense a home-coming, a respite from battle and the end of struggle and misunderstanding? Jerusalem was reached, and the friends of my boyhood and youth were about us. For a dangerous moment I hoped that the chapter about to open would be of more tranquil times, of increasing happiness and quiet influence in noble and congenial surroundings. How foolish of me even for a moment to hold such a hope or to dream such dreams! When the story of my first seven years in the Kirk of St Giles comes to be written it will tell of the hardest struggles and the bitterest controversies of all. It began quietly enough. The goodwill and hospitality of Edinburgh was offered to us with an unbelievable prodigality. I was told that if I conformed and did all the right things, honours and distinctions were mine without the asking. The temptations to sell my soul were real enough, and had to be fought over and over again. Yet, looking back from the midst of present conflicts, while I have regrets enough and painful experiences which have bitten into my heart, I do not believe that I could have acted differently without being unfaithful to my real self or without betraying the Gospel which I was called to preach these twenty-five years ago.

In many ways Edinburgh is like Jerusalem—the centre not only of law and government but of a nation's religion. With terrifying clarity whole passages of the Bible came alive for me till even I was afraid. The Passion of our Lord seemed inevitable when I read the Gospels with fresh insight and growing understanding. My recurring problem was whether to be faithful to what I believed or to trim my sails to the prevailing winds of Edinburgh opinion and custom. If there were times when I was tempted to lose my nerve I somehow always managed to recover balance just on the brink of disaster, and what might have become betrayals stopped short at denials, which I will always weep over secretly in my heart. There was to be less laughter and little sense of achievement. Without faith I could not have gone on, without the death of all bitterness I could never have preached Sunday by Sunday.

One Sunday I did come near to utter dereliction of spirit. I had started my sermon, with my heart and mind burdened and hurt. There were things I wanted to say, but could not bring myself to say them. I stumbled and faltered—the words would not come. And so, defeated and deeply ashamed, I gave out the closing hymn, and fled from the pulpit.

It almost seemed to me as though I was utterly alone and unsupported. But I was wrong: only recently I learned that some of the elders on duty that day showed themselves, by an unaccustomed silence in the Session House after the service, to be moved and upset. One of their number came to me that same evening, and in halting words tried to express what they felt. How often by some such simple gesture is the spirit of the preacher lifted: and at that time for me, never was encouragement more needed.

Sometimes I wonder if congregations know out of what anguish sermons are sometimes preached. They are mostly

the record of a man's spiritual growth and understanding, his personal fears and doubts, just as much as moments of truth and break-through.

Bit by bit, I was driven to test out the many foundations of my faith. I think I knew at last the feelings of the preacher I had listened to those so many years ago in a shabby church in this city: and I think too that now I know what he meant when out of his own desperation he could say "Jesus lives".

Appendix

St. John's
23 Shore Street,
Port Glasgow
19th February, 1940

Dilecte Frater,

Hac Epistola tibi commendo Henricum Whitley ministrum Ecclesiae Presbiterianae Scotiae, Designatum ad praestandam assistentiam socialem Britannicis militibus in Gallia (B.E.F.) Praeterea ipse incumbit in assistentiam spiritualem ejusdem Ecclesiae Presbiterianae membrorum, sed paratus est quantum potest, ad opus suum praestandum ad hoc ut milites catholici possint invenire debitam assistentiam apud sacerdotes nostrae Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae.

Ego testificari possum, ejus multa beneficia ad bonum Catholicorum et ad meam gratitudinem ostendendam ipsum commendo omnibus fidelibus et speciali modo meis confratribus in Sacerdotio Christi ut ipse possit invenire assistentiam et auxilium in illis difficilibus circumstantiis quae possunt ei occurrere et etiam habeat confortum nostrae christianae caritatis.

Devotissimus in Christo Jesu,
SIMON KEANE

Parochus
Ecclesiae S. Ionnis Baptistae,
Port Glasgow (Ecosse)

St. John's,
23 Shore Street,
Port Glasgow
19th February, 1940

Dear Brother,

This letter is written to commend Rev. Henry Whitley, Minister of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland to your good graces. He has been appointed to provide for the comfort and entertainment of the B.E.F. in France. He will also of course minister to the spiritual needs of soldiers of his own denomination. In addition he generously promises to help our Roman Catholic soldiers to find their own churches and priests. I have known Mr. Whitley for some years. He has been very friendly to me personally and helpful in many ways to our people. Accordingly I would like very much that my fellow Roman Catholics and especially my brothers in the priesthood of Jesus Christ would be friendly to him in all Christian charity, aiding him as far as possible in the many difficulties which are bound to arise in the difficult post allotted to him in a country to which he is a stranger.

Yours devotedly in J.C.

SIMON KEANE
Parish Priest of above Church

Service, definition of our vocational service p. 140
work, the rest we pay for our room on earth. p. 140
Ministry, consists in part in starting fights. p. 137
Trouble, the ministry consists partly in causing p. 137

Princeton Theological Seminary Libraries



1 1012 01311 0079

